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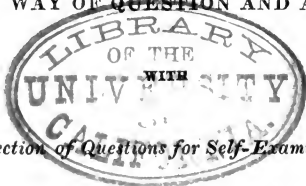
AN ANALYSIS

OF

PALEY'S

EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY;

IN THE WAY OF QUESTION AND ANSWER,



A Selection of Questions for Self-Examination,

DESIGNED FOR THE USE OF STUDENTS IN DIVINITY, AS WELL
AS FOR COUNTERACTING THE PROGRESS OF INFIDELITY
AMONGST THE MIDDLE CLASSES OF SOCIETY.

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CONTENTS.



	Page
Preparatory Considerations	11

PART I.

OF THE DIRECT HISTORICAL EVIDENCE OF CHRISTIANITY, AND
WHEREIN IT IS DISTINGUISHED FROM THE EVIDENCE AL-
LEGED FOR OTHER MIRACLES.

PROPOSITION I.

There is satisfactory Evidence that many, professing to be original Witnesses of the Christian Miracles, passed their Lives in Labours, Dangers and Sufferings, voluntarily undergone in Attestation of the Accounts which they delivered, and solely in consequence of their belief of those Accounts; and that they also submitted, from the same motives, to new Rules of Conduct.	11
CHAP. I. Evidence of the Sufferings of the first Propagators of Christianity, from the Nature of the Case	ib.
CHAP. II. Evidence of the Sufferings of the first Propagators of Christianity, from Profane Testimony	18
CHAP. III. Indirect Evidence of the Sufferings of the first Propagators of Christianity, from the Scriptures and other ancient Writings.	22
CHAP. IV. Direct Evidence of the same	25
CHAP. V. Observations on the preceding Evidence	32
CHAP. VI. That the Story for which the First Propagators of Christianity suffered, was MIRACULOUS	35
CHAP. VII. That it was in the main, the same Story which we have now, is proved by indirect Considerations.	38
CHAP. VIII. The same proved from the Authority of our historical Scriptures.	46
CHAP. IX. Of the Authenticity of the historical Scriptures in eleven Sections	54
SECT. I. Quotations of the historical Scriptures by ancient Christian writers	59
SECT. II. Of the peculiar Respect with which they were quoted	70
SECT. III. The Scriptures were in very early times collected into a distinct volume	73
SECT. IV. Our Scriptures were soon distinguished by appropriate titles of respect	75

	Page
SECT. V. Our Scriptures were publicly read and expounded in the Religious Assemblies of the early Christians - - -	77
SECT. VI. Commentaries, &c. were anciently written upon the Scriptures - -	79
SECT. VII. Our Scriptures were received by ancient Christians of different sects and persuasions	83
SECT. VIII. The Four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, thirteen Epistles of Saint Paul, the first of John, and the first of Peter, were received without doubt by those who doubted concerning the other books which are included in our present canon - - -	87
SECT. IX. Our Historical Scriptures were attacked by the early adversaries of Christianity, as containing the accounts upon which the Religion was founded - - -	90
SECT. X. Formal catalogues of authentic Scriptures were published, in all of which our present Sacred Histories were included. - -	93
SECT. XI. These propositions cannot be predicated of any of those books which are commonly called Apocryphal Books of the New Testament	95
CHAP. X Recapitulation - - -	97

PROPOSITION II.

CHAP. I. That there is NOT satisfactory evidence, that persons pretending to be original witnesses of any other similar miracles, have acted in the same manner, in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and solely in consequence of their belief in the truth of those accounts - - -	102
CHAP. II.	113

PART II.

ON THE AUXILIARY EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

CHAP. I. Prophecy - - -	118
CHAP. II. The Morality of the Gospel - -	124
CHAP. III. The candour of the Writers of the New Testament - - -	142
CHAP. IV. Identity of Christ's Character - -	146
CHAP. V. Originality of our Saviour's Character -	151
CHAP. VI. Conformity of the facts occasionally mentioned or referred to in Scripture, with the state of things in those times, as represented by foreign and independent accounts - - -	152
CHAP. VII. Undesigned coincidences - -	160
CHAP. VIII. Of the History of the Resurrection -	162
CHAP. IX. The Propagation of Christianity - -	164
SECT. II. Reflections on the preceding account	174
SECT. III. Of the Religion of Mahomet -	177

PART III.

A BRIEF CONSIDERATION OF SOME POPULAR OBJECTIONS.

CHAP. I. The discrepancies between the several Gospels	185
CHAP. II. Erroneous opinions imputed to the Apostles	188
CHAP. III. The connexion of Christianity with the Jewish History	192
CHAP. IV. Rejection of Christianity	194
CHAP. V. That the Christian Miracles are not recited, or appealed to, by early Christian Writers themselves, so fully or frequently as might have been expected	203
CHAP. VI. Want of universality in the knowledge and reception of Christianity, and of greater clearness in the Evidence	208
CHAP. VII. The supposed effects of Christianity	213
CHAP. VIII. The Conclusion	219

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PREPARATORY CONSIDERATIONS.

Q. WHY is it *unnecessary to prove* that mankind stood in no need of a revelation?

A. Because no serious person can think, that, even under the Christian revelation, we have too much light, or any superfluous assurance.

Q. In judging of Christianity, why does the question lie between this religion and none?

A. Because if the Christian religion be not credible, no one; with whom we have to do, will support the pretensions of any other.

Q. Suppose then the world we live in to have had a creator—suppose that the great aim of his provisions and contrivances observable throughout the universe, appears to be the happiness of his sensitive creation—suppose the disposition which dictated this counsel to continue—suppose a part of the creation to have received faculties from their maker by which they are capable of paying moral obedience, and of voluntarily pursuing any end for which he has designed them—suppose him to intend for these rational and ac-

countable agents a second state of existence in which their situation will be regulated by their behaviour in the first—suppose it to be of the utmost importance to the subjects of this dispensation to know what is intended for them—suppose, nevertheless, almost the whole race, either by the imperfection of faculties, misfortune of situation, or loss of some former revelation, to want this knowledge and not to be likely, without the aid of a new revelation, to obtain it—from these suppositions what follows?

A. It is by no means improbable, that God should interpose for the purpose of giving a new revelation to mankind, and of acquainting them with that future state for which he designed them.

Q. Now, in what way alone are we able to conceive that a revelation can be made?

A. By miracles.

Q. In what degree therefore is it probable, or not very improbable, that miracles should be wrought?

A. In the same degree as it is probable, or not very improbable, that the revelation itself should be given: therefore when miracles are said to have been wrought in the promulgating of a revelation plainly wanted, and if true, of inestimable value, the improbability arising from the miraculous nature of the things related, is not greater than the original improbability that such a revelation should be given by God.

Q. In what manner, however, and to what extent is this argument alleged by Paley?

A. He does not assume the attributes of the Deity, or the existence of a future state, in order to *prove* the reality of miracles. That reality must always be proved by evidence. He asserts only, that in the case of miracles adduced in support of revelation, there is not any such antecedent improbability as no testimony can surmount: and, he contends, that the incredibility of miracles related to have been wrought in attestation of a message from God, conveying intelligence of a future state of rewards and punishments, and teaching mankind how to prepare themselves for that state, is not greater than the event, (call it either *probable* or *improbable*,) of the two following propositions being true: namely, first, That a future state should be destined by God for his human creation; and, secondly, that being so destined, he should acquaint them with it.

The prejudication he would resist, is that to which a modern objection to miracles goes, *viz.* That no human testimony can, in any case, render them credible; and he thinks the reflection above stated, that if there be a revelation there must be miracles, and that, under the circumstances in which human beings are placed, a revelation is not improbable, or not improbable in any great degree, to be a fair answer to the whole objection.

Q. As it may be necessary to examine upon what principle this objection is founded, how may the principle itself be briefly stated?

A. That it is contrary to experience that a miracle should be true, but not contrary to experience that testimony should be false.

Q. How does Paley answer this?

A. He observes that there appears a small ambiguity in the term *experience*, and in the phrases, *contrary to experience*, or *contradicting experience*, which it may be necessary to remove in the first place.—Strictly speaking, the narrative of a fact is *then* only contrary to experience, when the fact is related to have existed at a time and place, at which time and place we being present did not perceive it to exist. Here the assertion is *contrary to experience*, properly so called; and this is a contrariety which no evidence can surmount. Short of this, no intelligible signification can be affixed to the term *contrary to experience*, but one, *viz.* That of not having ourselves experienced any thing similar to the thing related: or, such things not being generally experienced by others. We say *not generally*; for to state, concerning the fact in question, that no such thing was *ever* experienced, or that *universal* experience is against it, is to assume the subject of the controversy.

Q. Instead, however, of calling this a contradiction of experience, what ought it rather to be called?

A. A want of experience.

Q. And what is the improbability arising from this want equal to?

A. Only to the probability that, if the thing were true, such things would be generally experienced.

Q. Suppose it then to be true, that miracles were wrought on the first promulgation of Christianity, when nothing but miracles could decide its authority; to what question of *probability* does this lead?

A. Is it certain that such miracles would be repeated so often, and in so many places, as to become objects of general experience? Is it a probability approaching to certainty? Is it a probability of any great strength or force? Is it such as no evidence can encounter?

Q. And yet what is this probability?

A. It is the exact *converse*, and therefore the exact measure, of the improbability which arises from the want of experience, and which Mr. Hume represents as invincible by human testimony.

Q. Why is it not like alleging a new law of nature, or a new experiment in natural philosophy?

A. Because, when these are related, it is expected that, under the same circumstances, the same effect will follow universally; and in proportion as this expectation is justly entertained, the want of a corresponding experience negatives the history: but to expect concerning a miracle, that it should succeed upon a repetition, is to expect that which would make it cease to be a miracle, which is contrary to its nature as such, and

would totally destroy the use and purpose for which it was wrought.

Q. What does the *force of experience*, as an objection to miracles, presume with regard to the course of nature ?

A. That it is invariable, or that its variations will be general and frequent.

Q. But if we call the *course of nature*, the *agency of an Intelligent Being*, what then follows ?

A. It is not unreasonable to expect that such a Being may, upon occasions of peculiar importance, interrupt the order which he had appointed, yet that such occasions and consequent interruptions should occur seldom, and therefore be confined to the experience of a few.

Q. How may we answer the objection which has been advanced, that in accounts of miracles, effects are assigned without causes, or attributed to inadequate causes, or to causes of the operation of which we have no experience ?

A. We do not ascribe such effects to such causes ; we do not ascribe the cure of the palsy to a *touch*, or the raising of the dead to a *word*, these are merely signs to connect the miracle with its end. The effect we ascribe simply to the volition of the Deity, of whose existence, power, presence, and agency, we have previous and independent proof ; once therefore believe there is a God, and miracles are not incredible.

Q. But how does Mr. Hume state the case of miracles ?

A. As a contest of opposite improbabilities, that is to say, a question whether it be more improbable that the miracle should be true or the testimony false.

Q. Now although this be a fair account of the controversy, wherein may his want of argumentative justice be remarked?

A. In describing the improbability of miracles, he suppresses all those circumstances of extenuation which result from our knowledge of the existence, power, and disposition of the Deity; his concern in the creation, the end answered by the miracle, the importance of that end, and its subserviency to the plan pursued in the works of nature.

Q. According, therefore, to Mr. Hume's representation of the question how stands the incredibility of miracles?

A. They are alike incredible to him who is previously assured of the constant agency of a Divine Being, and to him who believes that no such being exists; whether related to have been wrought upon occasions the most deserving, and for purposes the most beneficial, or for no assignable end, or for an end confessedly trifling or pernicious.

Q. In adjusting also the strength and weight of testimonies, how has he provided an answer to every possible accumulation of historical proof?

A. By telling us that we are not obliged to explain how the story of the evidence arose.

Q. What does Paley think we *are* obliged to do?

A. That we are obliged,—not, perhaps, to show by positive accounts how it *did*, but by a probable hypothesis how it *might* so happen. The existence of the testimony is a phenomenon; the truth of the fact solves that phenomenon. If we reject this solution, we ought to have some other to rest in; and none, even by our adversaries, can be admitted, which is not inconsistent with the principles that regulate human affairs and conduct at present, or which makes men *then* to have been a different kind of beings from what they are now.

Q. But what short consideration independently of every other, shews the want of foundation in Mr. Hume's reasoning?

A. When a theorem is proposed to a mathematician, he first tries it upon a simple case; and if it produce a false result, he is sure there must be some mistake in the demonstration. Now, to proceed in this way with what may be called *Mr. Hume's Theorem*. If twelve men, whose probity and good sense we had long known, should seriously and circumstantially relate to us an account of a miracle wrought before their eyes, and in which it was impossible that they should be deceived; if the governor of the country, hearing a rumour of this account, should call these men into his presence, and offer them a short proposal, either to confess the imposture, or submit to be tied up to a gibbet; if they should refuse with one voice to acknowledge that there existed any falsehood or imposture in the case;

if this threat were communicated to them separately, yet with no different effect; if it were at last executed; if we ourselves saw them, one after another, consenting to be racked, burnt, or strangled, rather than give up the truth of their account;—still, if Mr. Hume's rule be our guide, we are not to believe them. Now, there exists not a sceptic in the world who would not believe them, or who would defend such incredulity.

PART I.

OF THE DIRECT HISTORICAL EVIDENCE OF
CHRISTIANITY, AND WHEREIN IT IS DIS-
TINGUISHED FROM THE EVIDENCE ALLEGED
FOR OTHER MIRACLES.

Q. What are the two Propositions which it is
Paley's endeavour to establish?

A. I. That there is satisfactory evidence that
many, professing to be original witnesses of the
Christian miracles, passed their lives in labours,
dangers, and sufferings, voluntarily undergone in
attestation of the accounts which they delivered,
and solely in consequence of their belief of those
accounts ; and that they also submitted, from the
same motives, to new rules of conduct.

II. That there is *not* satisfactory evidence, that
persons professing to be original witnesses of
other miracles, in their nature as certain as these
are, have ever acted in the same manner, in attes-
tation of the accounts which they delivered, and
properly in consequence of their belief of those
accounts.

CHAP. I.

PROPOSITION I.

There is satisfactory Evidence that many professing to be original Witnesses of the Christian Miracles, passed their Lives in Labours, Dangers, and Sufferings, voluntarily undergone in Attestation of the Accounts which they delivered, and solely in consequence of their Belief of those Accounts ; and that they also submitted, from the same motives, to new Rules of Conduct.

EVIDENCE OF THE SUFFERINGS OF THE FIRST PROPAGATORS OF CHRISTIANITY, FROM THE NATURE OF THE CASE.

Q. To support this proposition what two points must be made out ?

A. *First*, that the founder of the institution, his associates. and immediate followers, acted the part which the proposition imputes to them. *Secondly*, that they did so in attestation of the miraculous history recorded in our Scriptures, and solely in consequence of their belief of this history.

Q. But what is necessary to be considered before we produce any particular testimony to the

activity and sufferings which compose the subject of the first assertion ?

A. The degree of probability which the assertion derives from the *nature of the case*, as on all hands acknowledged.

Q. First then—as the Christian religion exists, and was, therefore, by some means or other established—what inference do you draw from this ?

A. That it must owe its first publication to the activity of its founder and his associates, unless we assent to the incredible supposition that it was taken up by others, whilst they were silent and quiet upon the subject.

Q. What kind and degree of exertion may we fairly ascribe to these persons ?

A. That which we observe in all others who voluntarily become missionaries of a new faith. Frequent, earnest, and laborious preaching—sequestration from the common pleasures and engagements of life—and a constant addiction to one serious object.

Q. Why is it improbable that persons would engage, or persist in such undertakings, from any other motive than conviction ?

A. Because, under a consciousness of falsehood, the fatigue and restraint of such a life would be insupportable.

Q. Secondly.—Why is it highly probable, from the nature of the case, that the propagation of the new religion was attended with difficulty and danger ? And first, as it was addressed to the Jews ?

A. It was a system adverse to those habitual opinions upon which their hopes, their pride, and their consolation was founded. It contradicted that rooted expectation of temporal advantage from the advent of their Messiah, to which they clung in all their calamities—instead of exalting their nation above the rest of the world, it raised those whom they despised to a level with themselves, and opposed their strongest prejudices, in extending the kingdom of God to those who did not conform to the Law of Moses.

Q. In what other respects was the character of the new institution ungrateful to Jewish habits and principles?

A. Their own religion was in a high degree technical. Even the enlightened Jew placed much stress upon the ceremonies of his law; the gross and vulgar considered them as the very essence of virtue; and the hypocritical and ostentatious magnified them as the instruments of their own influence. The Christian scheme, without formally repealing the Levitical code, lowered its estimation. In the place of zeal in its observances, and of tradition, the new sect preached up faith, and inward purity, as the true ground of merit and acceptance with God. Now to disparage those qualities upon which the highest characters valued themselves most, was a sure way of making powerful enemies.

Moreover the ruling party at Jerusalem had just before crucified the Founder of the religion. The preachers of that religion therefore, must

necessarily represent this as an unjust and cruel murder, which would not render their office more easy, or their situation more safe.

Q. What might be expected from the Romans?

A. A jealous severity towards the new sect arising from their misunderstanding the spiritual nature of Christ's Kingdom, and the avowed unqualified obedience of his followers.

Q. Do we actually know that the Romans entertained hostile sentiments to Christianity, derived from this cause?

A. We learn from the **N. T.** that this was the turn which the enemies of Jesus gave to his pretensions, in their remonstrances with Pilate; and Justin Martyr, about 100 years afterwards, complains that the same mistake prevailed.*

Q. What then, summarily speaking, had the first preachers of Christianity to contend with?

A. Prejudice backed by power—a disappointed people—a priesthood possessed of considerable municipal authority—and a foreign government constantly surrounded by their enemies.

Q. But why might opposition be reasonably expected by the preachers of Christianity from the heathen public?

A. Because (1) The religion they taught was *exclusive*: it denied the truth of all the heathen mythology; it was to prevail by the overthrow of all its altars and temples; it pronounced all its Gods to be false, and it endeavoured to sweep

* Ap. I^{ma}, p. 16. ed. Thirl.

away the foundation of the existing Establishment.

(2) The Christians did not, like the ancient Philosophers, propound doubts concerning the popular creed, and avow their disbelief of it, in books or schools : they went about to collect proselytes among the common people ; to form societies ; and to draw followers away from the public worship of the temple. (3) By this conduct they would incur danger not only from public acts and resolutions of the State, but from private enmity, from sudden bursts of popular fury, from the rashness or negligence of magistrates, from the instigation of interested adversaries, and generally from the variety and warmth of opinion excited by their novel undertaking.

Q. Why is it not probable that the first teachers of Christianity would find a protection in that general disbelief of the popular theology which then prevailed ?

A. Because it is true that unbelievers are usually tolerant ; or that they are disposed to endanger the present state of things, by suffering a religion of which they believe nothing, to be disturbed by another of which they believe as little ; as we may learn from the examples of those mild and virtuous men Pliny and Trajan. The ancient heathens considered religion as incorporated with the State, under the protection of the magistrate who executed many of its offices ; they would resent therefore every affront put upon the established worship, as a direct opposition to the authority of government. Moreover the ancient religion was

rooted in the affections of its votaries, in as much as men have a natural love for antiquity, especially in religious matters. It was also a splendid and sumptuous worship, abounding in festivals and shews, and the people were taught to believe that the prosperity of their country depended upon the due celebration of its rites.

Q. Lastly—How does the *nature of the case* afford a strong proof that the original teachers of Christianity, in consequence of their new profession, entered upon a *new and singular course of life*?

A. We may presume, that to the institution which they preached to others, they conformed in their own persons ; because this is what every teacher of a new religion does and must do, to obtain proselytes or hearers. The change which this would produce was very considerable : we do not easily estimate it, because being habituated to the institution from our infancy, it is what we neither experience nor observe. After men became Christians, much of their time was spent in prayer, in religious meetings, in celebrating the eucharist, in conferences, in exhortations, in preaching, in affectionate intercourse with one another, and in correspondence with other societies. To produce this at Corinth, at Ephesus, at Antioch, or even at Jerusalem, what a revolution there must have been of opinions and prejudices ?

And though the lives of these men might not have been as perfect as their lessons ; yet the ob-

servable part of their behaviour must have agreed in a great measure with the duties which they taught. Now men are brought almost to any thing sooner than to change their habit of life, especially when the change is inconvenient, or made against natural inclination, or with the loss of accustomed indulgences.

Q. Left then to ourselves, with no more knowledge than that of the existence of the Religion, of its general story, and of its success without any act of power or authority, to what conclusion are we led by the very nature and exigency of the case?

A. That the Author of the religion during his life, and his disciples after his death, *exerted* themselves in spreading and publishing it; that, in the prosecution of this purpose, they underwent the labours and troubles which we observe the propagators of new sects to undergo; that the attempt must necessarily have been highly dangerous; that from the hand of government, as well as the sudden fury and license of the people, they would often experience injurious and cruel treatment; that, at any rate, they must have always had so much to fear for their safety, as to have passed their lives in constant peril and anxiety; and, lastly, that their mode of life and conduct, visibly at least, corresponded with the institution which they delivered, and, so far, was new, and required continual self-denial,

CHAP. II.

EVIDENCE OF THE SUFFERINGS OF THE FIRST
PROPAGATORS OF CHRISTIANITY, FROM PRO-
FANE TESTIMONY.

Q. After a consideration of what was likely to happen, what are we next to enquire ?

A. How the transaction is represented in the several accounts that have come down to us.

Q. Why is the testimony of heathen writers very valuable ?

A. Because, so far as it goes, it is the concession of adversaries ; and the source from which it is drawn is unsuspected.

Q. What well-known quotation deserves particular attention in this case ?

A. That from Tacitus, written about 70 years after Christ's death, which relates to acts that took place about 30 years after that event. Speaking of the fire which happened at Rome in the reign of Nero he says :—" But neither these exertions, nor his largesses to the people, nor his offerings to the gods, did away the infamous imputation under which Nero lay, of having ordered the city to be set on fire. To put an end, therefore to this report, he laid the guilt, and inflicted the most cruel punishments, upon a set of people who were held in abhorrence for their crimes, and



called by the vulgar, *Christians*. The founder of that name was Christ, who suffered death in the reign of Tiberius; under his procurator Pontius Pilate. This pernicious superstition, thus checked for a while, broke out again; and spread not only over Judea, where the evil originated, but through Rome also, whither every thing bad upon earth finds its way, and is practised &c.”

Q. In support then of our proposition what does this passage prove?

A. It proves three things: 1st, That the Founder of the institution was put to death: 2ndly, That in the same country in which he was put to death, the religion, after a short check, broke out again and spread: 3rdly, That it so spread, as that, within 34 years from the Author's death; a very great number of Christians (*ingens eorum multitudo*) was found at Rome. From which fact it may fairly be inferred; first, that the original teachers and missionaries of the institution could not have been *idle*; secondly, that when its Author was put to death as a malefactor, the endeavours of his followers could not but be attended with danger.

Q. What does Suetonius, a contemporary of Tacitus, say of the Christians?

A. “Affecti suppliciiis Christiani, genus hominum superstitionis novæ at maleficæ.”* The Christians, a set of men of new and mischievous or (magical) superstition, were punished. And

* Nero, c. 16.

it is probable that Suetonius refers to some more general persecution than that of Tacitus.

Q. How does Juvenal allude probably to their persecution by Nero?

“Pone Tigellinum, tæda lucebis in illa,
Qua stantes ardent, qui fixo gutture fumant,
Et latum media sulcum deducis arena.”*

Q. In whose life-time is it probable that these things took place?

A. In that of some of the apostles, or certainly of some who were converted by them.

Q. If then the founder of the religion, and the first race of converts, suffered such extremities for their profession, what may we thence infer?

A. That those who came *between* the two, who were companions of the Author of the institution during his life, and its teachers and propagators after his death, could scarcely go about their undertaking with ease and safety.

Q. To what does the testimony of the younger Pliny, in his celebrated letter to Trajan, about 70 years after Christ's death, relate?

A. First, To the vast *number* of Christians in Bithynia and Pontus, and the great exertions which must have been used to produce this state of things. Secondly, to their sufferings, *without* any public persecution being denounced against them by sovereign authority. Still in consequence of informations, many had been appre-

hended, of whom some boldly avowed their profession, and died in the cause; others denied that they were Christians; others again, acknowledging that they had once been Christians, declared that they had long ceased to be such. All which demonstrates, that the profession of Christianity was attended with fear and danger; and yet this took place without any edict from the Roman Sovereign.

Q. How is Pliny's observation confirmed?

A. By a *rescript* of Adrian to Minucius Fundanus, Proconsul of Asia, which enjoins that in future the Christians shall not be punished without legal trial.

Q. What does Martial's testimony prove?

A. It proves, like that of Pliny, that the deaths of the Christians were voluntary, and martyrdoms in the strictest sense.*

Q. To what do Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius impute their intrepidity?

A. The former to madness, fashion, or habit;† the latter to obstinacy.‡

* Lib. x. Ep. 25.

† Epict. l. iv. c. 7.

‡ M. Aur. Med. l. xi. c. 3.

CHAP. III.

INDIRECT EVIDENCE OF THE SUFFERINGS OF
THE FIRST PROPAGATORS OF CHRISTIANITY,
FROM THE SCRIPTURES AND OTHER ANCIENT
WRITINGS.

Q. Since it is only an imperfect view of the primitive state of Christianity that can be acquired from heathen writers, where are we to look for its internal detail?

A. In our own books ; since no one could write a history of Christianity but a Christian.

Q. What documents have we relating to the history of Jesus Christ?

A. We have four histories of Jesus Christ. We have a history taking up the narrative from his death, for a space of nearly thirty years. We have a collection of letters, written by certain principal agents, attesting the point which we contend for, *viz.* the sufferings of the witnesses of the history, directly and indirectly, expressly and incidentally ; by assertion, recital, and allusion ; by narratives of facts, and by arguments and discourses built upon those facts.

Q. What then do our books relate ?

A. First, that Jesus Christ, the founder of the religion, was, in consequence of his undertaking, put to death as a malefactor, at Jerusalem : that

the religion was, *notwithstanding*, set forth at this same city, propagated from thence throughout Judea, and preached in other parts of the Roman empire. These points also are fully confirmed by Tacitus.

Q. How do these facts afford a strong inference in behalf of our proposition?

A. The disciples of Christ, when they saw their master put to death, could not hope to escape the dangers in which he had perished. "If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you," was the warning of common sense.

Q. What do we next learn from these histories?

A. That Christ foretold the persecution of his followers, in which they all agree; "Then they shall deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you, and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake."*

Q. Why are we not entitled to argue from these passages, that Christ actually did foretell these events, which accordingly came to pass?

A. Because that would be at once to assume the truth of the religion.

Q. What then are we entitled to contend?

A. That one side or other of the following disjunction is true; either that the Evangelists have delivered what Christ really spoke, and that the event corresponded with the prediction; or that

* Matt. xxiv. 9. see also Mark iv. 17. and x. 29. Luke xxi. 12, 16. xi. 49. John xvi. 4. xv. 20. xvi. 33.

they put the prediction into Christ's mouth, because, at the time of writing the history, the event had turned out so to be.

Q. Thirdly, how do these books tend to confirm our proposition?

A. They abound with exhortations to patience, and with topics of comfort under distress. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword? Nay in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us,"* and we may ask, what could all these texts mean, if there was nothing in the circumstances of the times which required patience, constancy, and resolution?

Q. But why may not these passages be forgeries?

A. Because it is impossible to believe, that passages which must be deemed not only unintelligible, but false, by the persons into whose hands the books upon their publication were to come, should be inserted, for the purpose of producing an effect upon remote generations.

* Rom. viii 35, 37. See also 2 Cor. iv. 8, 9, 10, 14, 16, 17. Heb. x. 32, 36. Rom. v. 3, 4. James v. 10, 11. 2 Thess. 1, 4, 5. 1 Pet. iv. 12, 13, 19.

CHAP. IV.

DIRECT EVIDENCE OF THE SUFFERINGS OF THE FIRST PROPAGATORS OF CHRISTIANITY, FROM THE SCRIPTURES AND OTHER ANCIENT WRITINGS.

Q. What account of the treatment of Christianity, and of the exertions of its first preachers, is stated in the SS. occasionally and dispersedly, and therefore without affording the supposition of a fraudulent design?

A. That the Founder of Christianity, during the whole of his ministry, employed it solely in Judea and Galilee; that, to assist him, he made choice of twelve persons; that, except a short absence, these persons were statedly and constantly attending upon him; were with him at Jerusalem when he was apprehended and put to death; and were commissioned by him, when his own ministry was concluded, to publish his Gospel, and collect disciples to it from all countries of the world.

Q. What does the account then proceed to state?

A. Having elected one of the constant companions of Jesus into the place vacant by the death of Judas, they began their work at Jerusa-

lem, by publicly asserting that Jesus, whom its rulers and inhabitants had so lately crucified, was the person in whom all their prophecies and expectations terminated. That considerable numbers joined them, and formed a strict union and society ; that the attention of the Jewish government being soon drawn upon them, two of the principal persons of the twelve, were seized in the temple ; that after being kept all night in prison, they were brought the next day before the assembly, and threatened with punishment if they persisted ; that these men reported what had passed to their companions, and apprized them of their danger ; which had no other effect upon their conduct than to produce in them a general resolution to persevere, and an earnest prayer to God to furnish them with assistance, and to inspire them with fortitude.

Q. What do we read after this ?

A. That a very short time after, all the twelve apostles were seized and cast into prison, brought a second time before the Sanhedrim, upbraided with their disobedience, and beaten for their contumacy ; that being charged once more to desist, they were suffered to depart ; that, however, they neither quitted Jerusalem nor ceased from preaching ; but considered themselves so exclusively devoted to this office, that they transferred the temporal affairs of the society to other hands.

Q. As however the forbearance of the Jewish rulers has been ascribed to the sentiments of the

common people being favourable to the first preachers of Christianity, what steps did its enemies soon take ?

A. They misrepresented it in the eyes of the people, as dishonouring their law, Lawgiver, and Temple, and engaged them in a general persecution of it, after having stoned a very active member of the new community.

Q. What became of the converts who were dispersed by this persecution ?

A. They preached the religion wherever they came ; and their preaching was, in effect, the preaching of the *twelve* ; for it was carried on in concert and correspondence with *them*.

Q. What important event in the history of the religion now took place ?

A. Persecutions, at the instigation of the Jews, followed the Christians into other countries where the Sanhedrim had influence ; but a young man, who had greatly signalized himself in this hostility, suddenly became a convert to the religion which he had been desirous of extirpating, thus bringing upon himself a double share of enmity from the party he had left, and escaping with difficulty from their attempts to destroy him.

Q. When did an intermission take place in the sufferings of the Christians ?

A. At the most only seven or eight, perhaps only three or four years after Christ's death.

Q. Within which period, occupied as it had partly been by persecution, what occurred ?

A. Churches had been formed in all Judea,

Galilee, and Samaria*; and the labours of the Preachers, both in Jerusalem and in foreign countries, had not been relaxed.

Q. Did this tranquility continue long ?

A. No. Herod Agrippa, who had lately succeeded to the government of Judea, “ stretched forth his hand to vex certain of the church.” He began by beheading one of the twelve original apostles. Perceiving that this gratified the Jews, he seized, in order to put to death, another, who was miraculously delivered from prison.

Q. How are these things related by the Historian ?

A. With the utmost particularity of names, persons, places, and circumstances ; and, what is deserving of notice, without the smallest discoverable propensity to magnify the fortitude, or exaggerate the sufferings of his party.

Q. Whither does our history, leaving the rest of the Apostles and original associates of Christ, now proceed ?

A. To the separate memoirs of that eminent teacher, whose extraordinary and sudden conversion to the religion, and corresponding change of conduct, had before been circumstantially described.

Q. What did this person do ?

A. With one associate from the early converts he set out from Antioch to carry the new religion through the Provinces of Asia Minor, amidst

* Acts ix. 31.

continual insults and dangers ; at the completion of their journey they rendered an account of their success to the Apostles and Elders at Jerusalem, by whom they were highly commended.

Q. Did the treatment which they experienced in the first progress hinder them from attempting a second ?

A. No ; but a dispute arising between them, not connected with the common subject of their labours, they acted as wise and sincere men would act ; they did not retire in disgust from the service, but, each devoting his endeavours to the advancement of the religion, they set forward upon separate routes.

Q. What does the history, which goes along with St. Paul, relate of this second enterprize ?

A. That it was attended with dangers and persecutions similar to the first.

Q. To what countries, do his second travel extend ?

A. He now crosses the Ægean Sea, and carries with him, the person whose accounts supply the information we are stating. He appears to have stopped at Philippi in Macedonia, where himself and one of his companions were cruelly whipped, and cast into prison. Notwithstanding this usage, they went forward on their errand. After passing through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where the house in which they lodged was assailed by a party of their enemies. Their reception at the next city was, something better ; but the Jews, excited

against them such commotions amongst the inhabitants, as obliged the apostle to make his escape to Athens. The extremity of his progress was Corinth, where he continued for some time, unmolested, till the Jews stirred up an insurrection against him, and brought him before the Roman president. It was to the contempt which that magistrate entertained for the Jews and their controversies, of which he accounted Christianity to be one, that our apostle owed his deliverance.

Q. After he had again visited Jerusalem, whither did St. Paul go ?

A. To Antioch, and once more to the northern provinces of Asia Minor. This progress ended at Ephesus; in which city the apostle continued in the daily exercise of his ministry two years, until his success at length excited the apprehensions of those who were interested in the national worship, whose clamour produced a tumult, in which he had nearly lost his life.

Q. When driven from Ephesus, where did the undismayed apostle renew his labours ?

A. In Macedonia, and Corinth; from whence he was driven back by a conspiracy of the Jews to Philippi; thence he proceeded into Asia, and made haste to arrive at Jerusalem against the feast of Pentecost.

Q. What kind of reception did he there meet with ?

A. The populace instigated by some of his old opponents of Asia, seized him in the temple, and would have killed him, had he not been rescued

by the Roman guard, the officer of which treated him afterwards with great severity, and would have examined him by torture.

Q. How did he escape this ?

A. He pleaded the privilege of a Roman citizen, remained in public custody of the Roman government, and having appealed to the Emperor, was sent to Rome, after having narrowly escaped assassination by the Jews.

Q. When he arrived at Rome, through considerable perils of shipwreck, what was his course of action ?

A. Neither his fate which was still depending, nor his former sufferings prevented him from preaching the new religion, and “teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence.”

Q. By what important coincidences is the historian of these facts supported ?

A. By the testimony of St. Paul himself in his own epistles, which without borrowing from the history, or the history from them, exhibit a great variety of particulars relating to his sufferings, dangers, and distresses.* Now these coincidences, with many others relating to St. Paul's history, greatly confirm the credit of the historian and support his pretensions to having been a contemporary and companion of the apostle.

* Compare Acts xvi. 23, 24. with 1 Thess. ii. 2. Acts xvii. 5. with 1 Thess. i. 6. Acts xix. with 2 Cor. viii. 10. Acts xiii. 50. xiv. 5, 19. with 2 Tim. iii. 10, 11. Acts xx. 34, with 1 Cor. iv. 11, 12.

Q. By what are the Apostolical Epistles, which declare the suffering state of Christianity, expressly confirmed ?

A. By the writings which remain of their companions and immediate followers.

Q. Who are some of these ?

A. Clement and Hermas, who are both mentioned by St. Paul, Polycarp the disciple of John, and Ignatius a contemporary of Polycarp.

Q. In whose writings may we see a most affecting picture of the dreadful torments to which Christian Martyrs were subjected ?

A. In those of Polycarp.*

CHAP. V.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE PRECEDING EVIDENCE.

Q. What does the Scripture History, though it is chiefly confined to one apostle, still shew with regard to the rest ?

A. *The nature of the service.*

Q. How does this appear ?

A. When we see one apostle suffering in discharge of his commission, we shall not believe, without evidence, that the rest escaped : besides, St. Paul, in numerous instances, refers to the

sufferings of the rest, like his own.* We have also an account in the Acts of the seizure and imprisonment of two of them, of the whole number being imprisoned and beaten, of the martyrdom of Stephen, of the beheading of one, and of another sentenced to the same fate.

Q. Now as we take no credit, at present, for the miraculous part of the narrative, nor insist upon the correctness of single passages, what fact do we contend for, and with justice, unless the whole history can be proved a romance?

A. That the original followers of Christ used great exertions in propagating his religion, and underwent great labours and sufferings in consequence.

Q. By what is the general reality of the apostolic history strongly confirmed?

A. In that it only assigns adequate causes for effects which were certainly produced, and which are recorded in other writings. It is acknowledged on all hands, that the religion began to prevail at that time and in that country which the history asserts. We cannot conceive how it could prevail without the exertions of the founder and his followers: now the history describes these persons, their exertions, their means, and their labours; whilst the treatment which it declares they received, would naturally result from the situation in which they were placed. As the new religion was adverse to the opinions, hopes, and

* 1 Cor. iv. 9. & seq.

wishes of the Jews and tended to overthrow the established worship of all other nations, we cannot but believe that its propagators would meet with that opposition which the history details, especially when we consider the character of the age and the country in which it was carried on.

Q. What else do these records supply evidence to prove ?

A. That the primitive followers of Jesus were not only conspicuous by their activity and courage, but by the new and peculiar course of life which they assumed,* for the purity of their principles and benevolence of their actions ; in compliance with the injunctions of their teachers which were very strict on this point.

Q. Where is this new character perpetually referred to ?

A. In the letters of their teachers.†

Q. What profane author adds his testimony to this character, about 50 years after St. Paul ?

A. Pliny, who draws their character from an accurate inquiry into their moral principles as a magistrate.

Q. What does this tend to prove ?

A. That a strict and pure morality prevailed at that time in Christian societies ; and that we are authorized to carry back this testimony to the Apostolical age, since it is not at all probable that the immediate hearers of Christ were more relaxed than their successors in Pliny's time.

* Acts i. 14. ii. 46. xii. 12.

† Ephes. ii. 1-3. Tit. iii. 3. 1 Pet. 3, 4. 1 Cor. vi. 2. Rom. vi. 21.

CHAP. VI.

THAT THE STORY FOR WHICH THE FIRST PROPAGATORS OF CHRISTIANITY SUFFERED, WAS MIRACULOUS.

Q. What are the considerations, briefly stated, as considered in the preceding chapters?

A. (1) The prevalency of the religion at this hour; (2) The only credible account which can be given of its origin, viz. the activity of the Founder and his associates; (3) The opposition which that activity must naturally have excited; (4) The fate of the Founder of the religion, attested by Heathen writers as well as by our own; (5) The same testimony to the sufferings of Christians, either contemporary with, or immediately succeeding, the original settlers of the institution; (6) Predictions of the sufferings of his followers ascribed to the Founder, proving either that such predictions were delivered and fulfilled, or at least that the writers of Christ's life were induced by the event to attribute such predictions to him; (7) Letters now in our possession, written by some of the principal agents, referring expressly to their extreme labours and sufferings: (lastly) a history purporting to be written by a fellow-traveller of one of the new teachers, and by its unsophisticated correspondency with letters of

that person still extant, proving itself to be written by some one well acquainted with the subject of the narrative ; which history contains accounts of travels, persecutions, and martyrdoms, answering to what the former reasons led us to expect.

Q. What do these considerations tend to prove ?

A. That a number of persons at that time appeared, publicly advancing an extraordinary story ; and, for the sake of propagating the belief of it, voluntarily incurred great dangers, traversing seas and kingdoms, exerting great industry, and sustaining great extremities of persecution. Also, that the same persons, in consequence of their persuasion, or pretended persuasion, of its truth, entered upon a course of life in many respects new and singular.

Q. From the clear and acknowledged parts of the case, what else is highly probable ?

A. That the story for which these persons voluntarily exposed themselves to fatigues and hardships, was a *miraculous* story ; or that they pretended to miraculous evidence of some kind or other, since they had nothing else to stand upon.

Q. How do you shew this ?

A. A Galilean peasant was announced to the world as a divine lawgiver. A young man of mean condition, and who had wrought no deliverance for the Jewish nation, was declared to be their Messiah. This, without ascribing to him, some proofs of his mission, (and what other but supernatural proofs could there be ?) was too absurd a claim to be either imagined or credited.

There was nothing but the miracles attributed to him, by which his pretensions could be maintained for a moment. Every controversy and question must pre-suppose these : for, however such controversies, when they did arise, might naturally be discussed upon their own grounds of argumentation, without citing the miraculous evidence which had been asserted to attend the Founder of the religion (which would have been to enter upon another and more general question), yet, without previously supposing the existence, or pretence of such evidence, there could have been no place for the discussion of the argument at all.

Q. From what else do you infer that the original story was miraculous ?

A. From the miraculous powers laid claim to by the Christians of succeeding ages. If the accounts of these miracles be true, it was a continuation of the same powers ; if false, it was an imitation, at least, of what had been reported of their predecessors.

CHAP. VII.

THAT IT WAS IN THE MAIN, THE SAME STORY WHICH WE HAVE NOW, IS PROVED BY INDIRECT CONSIDERATIONS.

Q. It being once proved that the first propagators of Christianity did make exertions, and undergo dangers and sufferings, on account of an extraordinary, and we may say, miraculous story, of some kind or other, what is the next great question?

A. Whether the account which our Scriptures contain, be that story; that for which these men so acted and suffered.

Q. Of this what proofs may be deduced from general considerations, prior to any inquiry into the particular authority of our histories?

A. First, there exists no trace or vestige of any other story. It is not, like the death of Cyrus the Great, a competition between opposite accounts, or between the credit of different historians. The remote, brief, and incidental notices of the affair, found in heathen writers, so far as they do go, go along with us. They bear testimony to these facts: viz. That the institution originated from Jesus, who was put to death at Jerusalem; that it nevertheless spread in that city, and throughout Judea, and was propagated

to distant countries; that the converts were numerous; that they suffered great hardships for their profession; and all this in the age of the world which our books have assigned.

Q. How do they go on further to describe the manners of Christians?

A. In terms perfectly conformable to the accounts extant in our books:—that they were wont to assemble on a certain day; that they sang hymns to Christ as to a god; that they bound themselves by an oath not to commit any crime, but to abstain from theft and adultery, to adhere strictly to their promises; and not to deny money deposited in their hands; that they worshipped him who was crucified in Palestine; who had taught them, that they were all brethren; that they had a great contempt for the things of this world; that they flew to one another's relief; that they cherished strong hopes of immortality; despised death, and surrendered themselves to sufferings.

Q. In what relation to the religion did the writers of this account stand?

A. They were uninformed and uninterested about it: their account describes general effects without descending to details, or interior of the institution, or to the evidence and arguments by which converts to it were made.

Q. What may be observed of the few Jewish writers of that period which have come down to us?

A. The same. They advance no other history of the transaction than that which we acknowledge.

Q. What do we gather from the writings of Josephus ?

A. He makes mention of John the Baptist by name, as well as of his peculiar characteristics : of “ James, the brother of him who was called Jesus, and of his being put to death :” also of Jesus himself ; of his miracles and teaching ; of his drawing over to him Jews and Gentiles ; of his being the Christ ; of his condemnation by Pilate ; of his execution ; of his resurrection on the third day according to the prophecies ; and of his sect existing at that time.

Q. Has the genuineness of this passage been questioned ?

A. Yes : but whether the passage be genuine or not, still our assertion remains true, that he gives no different history of the subject, or of its origin, from ours.

Q. What also may with great reason be contended ?

A. Either that the passage is genuine or that the silence of Josephus was *designed*.

Q. Whence do you draw this conclusion ?

A. If Tacitus, Suetonius, and Pliny, who all wrote within 30 years after Josephus, give an account of the great increase of Christians even in Rome and its Provinces, and of multitudes who suffered martyrdom for their religion, it cannot

be believed that the religion and the transaction upon which it was founded, were too obscure to obtain a place in the History of Josephus.

Q. How then do you account for this designed silence?

A. Perhaps he did not know how to represent the business, and disposed of his difficulties by passing it over; as Eusebius, in his life of Constantine, for a similar reason, passed over the most remarkable event in it, the death of his son Crispus. His reserve on this subject appears in his passing over the banishment of the Jews by Claudius, and the slaughter of the Innocents.

A. But further, what may be observed of the whole series of Christian writers from the first age down to the present time?

A. They proceed upon the general story which our Scriptures contain, and upon no other.

Q. When will this argument appear of great force?

A. When it is known that we are able to trace back this series to a contact with the historical books of the N. T., and to the age of the first emissaries of the religion, and to deduce it, by an unbroken continuation, from that end of the train to the present.

Q. What do the remaining letters of the apostles, written without the remotest design of transmitting such a history to future ages, *incidentally* disclose to us?

A. All the principal circumstances of the history, as they relate to Christ and to his apostles,

as well as that miracles were not only wrought, but that *they were the signs of an apostle*.

Q. What is related in an extant epistle of Barnabas the companion of St. Paul, which is probably genuine, and certainly of that age?

A. We have therein not only an account of the sufferings of Christ; the choice of his apostles; the circumstances of his death and resurrection; but a positive, though general, reference to his miracles.*

Q. What does Clement, a hearer of St. Paul, record?

A. The resurrection of Christ and the subsequent mission of the apostles; also we find noticed by him the humility of Christ, his descent from Abraham, and his crucifixion; as well as the sufferings of St. Peter and St. Paul.

Q. What is recorded in the brief epistle of Polycarp a disciple of St. John?

A. The humility, patience, sufferings, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, with the apostolic character of St. Paul, are distinctly recognized.

Q. What are the allusions in the remaining works of Ignatius a contemporary of Polycarp?

A. He refers to the descent of Christ from David, to his miraculous conception, with many particulars of his life; but he circumstantially describes his resurrection.

Q. To what does Quadratus, a contemporary of Ignatius bear testimony?

* Ep. Bar. c. vii.

A. To the works and miracles of our Saviour.

Q. What do we learn from Justin Martyr, who came little more than 30 years after Quadratus ?

A. From Justin's works, which are still extant, might be collected a tolerably complete account of Christ's life, in all points agreeing with that which is delivered in our Scriptures; taken, indeed, in a great measure, from those Scriptures, but still proving that this account, and no other, was the account known and extant in that age. The miracles in particular which form the part of Christ's history most material to be traced, stand fully and distinctly recognized.

Q. Why is it unnecessary to carry these citations lower ?

A. Because the history, after this time, occurs in ancient Christian writings as familiarly as it is wont to do in modern sermons ;—occurs always the same in substance, and always that which our evangelists represent it : and this, not only in those writings which are decidedly genuine, but in all their ancient writings which remain.

Q. How does it appear that the religious rites of the early Christians sprung out of the narrative now in our hands, and which therefore must be the narrative they received from their teachers ?

A. Our account makes the Founder of the religion direct that his disciples should be baptized :—we know that the first Christians were baptized. Our account makes him direct that they should hold religious assemblies :—we find that they did

hold religious assemblies. Our accounts make the apostles assemble upon a stated day of the week :—we find, that the Christians of the first century did observe stated days of assembling. Our histories record the institution of the rite which we call the Lord's Supper, and a command to repeat it in perpetual succession :—we find, amongst the early Christians, that the celebration of this rite was universal.

Q. Why is there no room for insinuating that the authors of our books found these rites and usages established, and framed the story to account for their original?

A. The Scripture accounts, especially of the Lord's Supper, are too short and cursory, not to say too obscure, and, in this view, deficient, to allow a place for any such suspicion.

Q. What other proof does Paley adduce, that the accounts in our Gospels are, as to their principal parts at least, those which the apostles and first teachers delivered?

A. It appears by the Gospels themselves that the story was public at the time; that the Christian community was already in possession of the substance and principal parts of the narrative. The Gospels were not the original cause of the Christian history being believed, but were themselves among the consequences of that belief.—This is expressly affirmed by Saint Luke, in his brief, but very important and instructive preface.

Q. How does the same point appear from Saint John's Gospel?

A. There are some principal facts to which the historian refers, but which he does not relate. A remarkable instance of this kind is the *ascension*, which is not mentioned by Saint John in its place, at the conclusion of his history, but which is plainly referred to in the sixth chapter : And still more positively in the words which Christ, according to our evangelist, spoke to Mary after his resurrection. This can only be accounted for by the supposition, that Saint John wrote under a sense of the notariety of Christ's ascension.

Q. How do you draw the same conclusion from Saint Matthew's omission of this important fact ?

A. The thing was very well known ; and it did not occur to the historian that it was necessary to add any particulars concerning it. It agrees also with this solution, and with no other, that neither Matthew nor John disposes of the person of our Lord in any manner whatever.

Q. In recapitulation then, what four circumstances are sufficient to support an assurance, that the story which we have now, is, in general, the story which Christians had at the beginning ?

A. First, The recognition of the account in its principal parts, by a series of succeeding writers ; secondly, The total absence of any account of the origin of the religion substantially different from ours ; thirdly, The early and extensive prevalence of rites and institutions which result from our account ; fourthly, Our account bearing, in its construction, proof that it is an account of facts, which were known and believed at the time.

CHAP. VIII.

THE SAME PROVED FROM THE AUTHORITY OF
OUR HISTORICAL SCRIPTURES.

I. Q. In treating upon this part of our argument what is the first and most material observation?

A. That such was the situation of the authors, that, if any one of the four Gospels be genuine, it is sufficient for our purpose. The received author of the first, was an original apostle and emissary of the religion;—of the second, an inhabitant of Jerusalem, and an attendant upon one of the most eminent of the apostles;—of the third, a fellow-traveller of the most active of all the teachers of the religion;—of the fourth, one of the apostles. They all lived at the time and upon the spot. The authors of two of the histories wrote from personal knowledge and recollection; and what strengthens their testimony, upon a subject in which their minds were deeply engaged, and in which, by repeating the accounts to others, the passages of the history would be kept continually alive in their memory.

Q. The narratives of Matthew and John, supposing them to be genuine, must either be true in substance, or wilful falsehoods: in this latter case, what should we necessarily think of the authors?

A. That they sacrificed their ease and safety in the cause, and for a purpose the most inconsistent that is possible with dishonest intentions. They were villains for no end but to teach honesty,—and martyrs without the least prospect of honour or advantage.

Q. How are the Gospels which bear the names of Mark and Luke to be estimated?

A. Although not the narratives of eye-witnesses, they are, if genuine, removed from that only by one degree. They are the narratives of contemporary writers, mixing with the business; and both of them living in habits of correspondence with those who had been present at the transactions they relate.

Q. The situation of the writers applies to the *truth* of the facts which they record; but at present we only assert that the facts recorded in the Gospels are the same as what the apostles preached. What is the proof of this?

A. A set of men went about the world, publishing a miraculous story, and, upon the strength of it, called upon mankind to take up a new system of opinions, and new rules of action. What is more, in attestation of this story, the same men voluntarily exposed themselves to perpetual labours and sufferings. We want to know what these accounts were. We have many particulars from two of their own number—from an attendant of one of them—from a fourth writer, who accompanied the most laborious missionary of the institution in his travels, who was fre-

quently brought into the society of the rest, and who begins his narrative by telling us,—that he is about to relate the things which had been delivered by those who were ministers of the word, and eye-witnesses of the facts. No information can be more satisfactory than this.

Q. How may we, perhaps, perceive the force and value of it more sensibly?

A. If we reflect how *requiring* we should have been, if we had wanted it: how we should have coveted the information of eye-witnesses and ear-witnesses of sufferers for the religion's sake, or even of contemporaries: if then our books be genuine, we have the very species of information which our imagination would have carved out for us, had it been wanting.

Q. Now if *any one* of the four Gospels be genuine, what do we gain?

A. We have direct historical testimony to the point we contend for, which, so far as that point is concerned, cannot reasonably be rejected. If the first Gospel was really written by Matthew, we have the narrative of one of the number, from which to judge what miracles the apostles attributed to Jesus. Although, for argument's sake, we should allow that this Gospel had been erroneously ascribed to Matthew; yet, if the Gospel of Saint John be genuine, the observation holds with no less strength. Again, although both these Gospels be supposed spurious, yet, if the Gospel of Saint Mark or that of Saint Luke really proceeded from him, or any other person

actually in the same situation ; we still possess the account of at least one contemporary and associate of the apostles ; which authority seems sufficient, when the question is simply what it was which these apostles advanced.

Q. The New Testament contains four distinct histories, the genuineness of any one of which it is sufficient to prove. If therefore we must be considered as encountering the risk of error in determining the authors of our books, to what advantage are we entitled ?

A. To that of so many separate probabilities.

Q. Suppose it should appear, that some of the Evangelists had seen and used each other's works, how does this diminish but little, either their separate authority, or their mutual confirmation ?

A. Let the most disadvantageous supposition possible be made ; let it be allowed, that Mark compiled his history almost entirely from those of Matthew and Luke ; and let it also, for a moment, be supposed that these histories were not, in fact, written by Matthew and Luke ; yet, if it be true that Mark, a contemporary of the apostles, living in habits of society with the apostles, made the compilation, it follows, that the writings from which he made it existed in the times of the apostles ; and also that they were then in such esteem and credit, that a companion of the apostles formed a history out of them.

Q. What may we suppose from the parallelisms observable between Matthew and Luke ?

A. That Luke had consulted St. Matthew's

history, or that short minutes of Christ's life and preaching had been committed to writing, which both had consulted; either of which suppositions will agree with the acknowledged formation of St. Luke's narrative, who professes to have examined original and authentic documents for all his accounts.

Q. What is the Gospel of St. John allowed on all hands to be?

A. Strictly an independent testimony. Therefore if any one of the four Gospels be genuine, we have, in that one, strong reason to believe that we possess the accounts which the original emissaries of the religion delivered.

II. Q. In treating of the written evidence of Christianity what are we next to consider?

A. Their *aggregate* authority.

Q. How is this to be considered?

A. In the Evangelical History there is an accumulation of testimony which belongs hardly to any other, but which our habitual mode of reading the Scriptures causes us to overlook—Each gospel is a great confirmation of the others; the Acts of the Apostles forms a most confirmatory supplement to them all; and the various Epistles support the conclusion: but being from our infancy accustomed to regard the N. T. as one book, we see in it only one testimony—the coincidence does not appear to us what it is—we lose the weight of successive disclosure and successive confirmation: yet the very discrepancies in the different documents which form our volume, shew

that for the most part they were independent productions.

Q. In the composition of these documents what seems to be the natural progress ?

A. Whilst the transaction was recent, and the original witnesses were at hand to relate it ; whilst the apostles were busied in preaching and travelling ; and whilst they exercised their ministry in a state of almost continual alarm ; it is not probable that, in this unsettled condition they would think immediately of writing histories for the information of the public or of posterity. But it is probable, that emergencies might draw from some of them occasional letters to converts, or to societies with which they were connected ; or that they might address written discourses and exhortations to the disciples of the institution at large. Accounts in the mean time would get abroad of the extraordinary things that had been passing, written with different degrees of information and correctness. The extension of the Christian society, prohibiting a personal intercourse with the apostles, and the possible circulation of imperfect or erroneous narratives, would soon teach some amongst them the expediency of sending forth authentic memoirs of the life and doctrine of their Master. When the authorized accounts appeared, other accounts would fall into disuse and neglect ; whilst these, standing the test of time, inquiry, and contradiction, might be expected to make their way into the hands of all Christians.

Q. With this progress how do the records in our possession correspond ?

A. We have remaining, many letters, preserved with care and fidelity, not indeed written purposely to prove the truth of the Christian religion, nor to convey information of facts, already known. We are not therefore to look in them for any thing more than incidental allusions to the Christian history. We are able, however, to gather from them particular attestations, a species of written evidence, as far as it goes, in the highest degree satisfactory, and in point of time perhaps the first. But for our more circumstantial information, we have five direct *histories*, bearing the names of persons acquainted with the truth of what they relate, and three purporting, in the very narrative, to be written by such persons ; of which books we know, that some were in the hands of contemporaries of the apostles, and that, in the next age, they were in the hands, we may say, of every one, and received by Christians, as such histories, proceeding from such authorities, might expect to be received. They soon superseded other accounts and acquired a character, which does not appear to have belonged to any other.

Q. How is it that the genuineness of the Historical books of the N. T. though undoubtedly a point of importance, is not essential to our argument ?

A. The question is, whether the Gospels exhibit the story which the Apostles preached and

for which they acted and suffered. Suppose we only knew that they were written by some of the early disciples of Christianity, but that they were known and read during the time of the original apostles and *received* in societies founded by them, as containing an authentic account of facts upon which the religion rested; this reception would be a solid proof that these books, whoever were their authors, must have accorded with what the apostles taught. Now their early existence and reputation, is made out by ancient testimonies which do not specify the names of the writers. Two of the four Gospels in the body of the history, fix the time and situation of the writers, one as an eyewitness of the sufferings of Christ, the other as a contemporary of the apostles. The Gospel of Saint John designates the author as witnessing the crucifixion and as having been written by the disciple "whom Jesus loved." The remaining Gospel purports to have been written by the author of the Acts, wherein he declares himself a contemporary of all, and a companion of one of the original preachers of Christianity.

CHAP. IX.

OF THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE HISTORICAL SCRIPTURES, IN ELEVEN SECTIONS.

Preliminary Observations.

I. Q. What proves that the Scriptures were not of modern contrivance, as well as that they were more sought after in many different countries than any other books ?

A. The great number of ancient manuscripts, all anterior to the art of printing, found in widely distant countries, as well as numerous versions in a vast variety of languages.

II. Q. What argument arises from the style and language of the New Testament ?

A. It is exactly suited to the age and situation of the apostles, and to that of no other persons. It resembles neither the style of the classic authors, nor of the Fathers, but it is Greek from a Hebrew origin, abounding with Hebrew and Syriac idioms ?

Q. How is this peculiarity a strong proof of genuineness ?

A. Who should be the forgers ? The Christian Fathers were mostly ignorant of Hebrew—The few who had a knowledge of it, used a style very different from that of the N. T., and the Na-

zarenes who understood Hebrew, used perhaps almost entirely St. Matthew's Gospel—The argument at least proves the great antiquity of these books.

III. Q. Why are the accounts of supernatural events, which these books contain, no reason for questioning their genuineness?

A. This may apply to a writer's judgment or veracity, but it affects the question of genuineness very indirectly. The works of Bede exhibit many wonderful relations; but who for that reason, doubts that they were written by Bede? The same of a multitude of other authors. To which may be added, that we ask no more for our books than what we allow to other books in some sort similar; we do not deny the genuineness of the Koran; we admit that the history of Apollonius Tyanæus, purporting to be written by Philostratus, was really written by Philostratus.

IV. Q. If it had been easy to have forged Christian writings in the early ages, what is it probable we should have had?

A. Many in the name of Christ himself, as none would have been received with such avidity and respect as these.

Q. Was there any attempt at this?

A. We have heard but of one deserving the least notice;—viz. a short Epistle of Christ, to Abgarus king of Edessa; and this was unsuccessful; for it is not mentioned by any writer of the first three centuries, and is suspected to be an interpolation in Eusebius's history.

V. Q. If the ascription of the Gospels had been arbitrary or conjectural, what would have been the case?

A. They would have been ascribed to more eminent men.

Q. To which of the Evangelists does this particularly apply?

A. To the three first, who were persons well enabled, by their situation, to obtain true intelligence, but not distinguished in the history by any extraordinary marks of notice or commendation.

VI. Q. Did Christian writers and Christian churches soon arrive at a general agreement upon this subject?

A. They did, and that without the interposition of any public authority.

Q. What does this shew?

A. When the diversity of opinion which prevailed, and prevails among Christians in other points, is considered, their concurrence in the canon of Scripture is of great weight, especially as it seems to have been the result of private and free inquiry.

Q. What was the first interference of Authority in the question?

A. The counsel of Laodicea in the year 363, but probably the decree of this council rather declared than regulated the public judgment.

Q. Though these considerations are not to be neglected, yet of an argument concerning the genuineness of ancient writings, what is the principal strength?

A. Ancient testimony.

Q. Why is it necessary to exhibit this testimony somewhat in detail?

A. Because when Christian advocates merely tell us that we have the same reason for believing the Gospels to be written by the evangelists whose names they bear, as we have for believing the Commentaries to be Cæsar's, or the *Æneid* Virgil's, this is an imperfect representation. They state no more than what is true; but not the truth correctly. In the number, variety, and early date of our testimonies, we far exceed all other ancient books. But then it is more requisite in our books than in theirs, to separate and distinguish them from spurious competitors.

Q. What method does Paley propose to himself in exhibiting this testimony?

A. First, to place before the reader, in one view, the propositions which comprise the several heads of our testimony, and afterwards to repeat the same propositions in so many distinct sections, with the necessary authorities subjoined to each.

Q. What then are the allegations upon the subject which are capable of being established by proof?

A. I. That the historical books of the N. T. meaning the 4 Gospels and the Acts, are quoted, or alluded to, by a series of Christian writers, beginning with those who were contemporary with the apostles, or who immediately followed them, and proceeding in close and regular succession to the present time.

II. That when they are quoted or alluded to, it is with peculiar respect, as books *sui generis*; as possessing an authority belonging to no other books, and as conclusive in all questions among Christians.

III. That they were in very early times collected into a distinct volume.

IV. That they were distinguished by appropriate names and titles of respect.

V. That they were publicly read and expounded in the religious assemblies of the early Christians.

VI. That commentaries were written upon them, harmonies formed out of them, different copies carefully collated, and versions of them made into different languages.

VII. That they were received by Christians of different sects, by many heretics as well as catholics, and usually appealed to by both sides in the controversies of those days.

VIII. That the four Gospels, the Acts, thirteen Epistles of St. Paul, the first Epistle of John, and the first of Peter, were received without doubt, by those who doubted concerning the other books included in our present canon.

IX. That the Gospels were attacked by the early adversaries of Christianity, as books containing the accounts upon which the religion was founded.

X. That formal catalogues of authentic Scriptures were published; in all of which our present sacred histories were included.

XI. That these propositions cannot be affirmed of any other books claiming to be books of Scripture; by which are meant those books which are commonly called Apocryphal Books of the N. T. —

SECTION I.

The Historical Books of the New Testament, are quoted, or alluded to, by a series of Christian Writers, beginning with those who were contemporary with the Apostles, or who immediately followed them, and proceeding in close and regular succession from their Time to the present.

Q. What would you say regarding the medium of proof stated in this proposition?

A. It is of all others the most unquestionable, the least exposed to fraud, and is not diminished by time.

Q. Can you shew this by examples?

A. Bishop Burnet, in the History of his own Times, inserts extracts from Lord Clarendon's History: one such extract proves that Lord Clarendon's History was extant, read, and received as genuine and authentic when Bishop Burnet wrote.

Q. What testimonies of this kind have we to produce?

I. A. In an epistle ascribed to Barnabas, the companion of Paul, quoted as genuine by many of the fathers, and purporting to have been written soon after the destruction of Jerusalem, appears the following remarkable passage:—"Let us, therefore, beware lest it come upon us, *as it is written*,—There are many called, but few chosen." From the expression "as it is written," we infer, that, when the author of this epistle lived, there was a book extant, well known to Christians, and of authority, containing these words: "Many are called, few chosen." In our Gospel of Saint Matthew, this text is twice found, and in no other book now known. We may further observe from this quotation that the writer of the epistle was a Jew. The phrase "it is written," was the very form in which the Jews quoted their Scriptures. Books from which he quoted therefore had acquired a kind of scriptural authority.

Beside this passage, there are also in that epistle several others, in which the sentiment is the same as we meet with in Saint Matthew, and two or three in which we have the same words.

II. We have an epistle written by Clement, of Rome, mentioned by Saint Paul Phil. iv. 3. and which is universally acknowledged.

This epistle affords, amongst others, the following valuable passages:—"Especially remembering the words of the Lord Jesus which he spake, teaching gentleness and long suffering; for this he said, 'Be ye merciful, that ye may ob-

tain mercy; forgive, that it may be forgiven unto you, &c.*

Again: "Remember the words of the Lord Jesus; for he said, "Wo to that man by whom offences come; it were better for him that he had not been born, than that he should offend one of my elect; it were better for him that a mill-stone should be tied about his neck, &c."†

Q. What objection may be raised against this testimony of Clement?

A. It may be said that as Clement has not words of quotation, it is not certain that he refers to any book whatever.

Q. How is this objection answered?

A. (1) Clement, without any mark of reference, uses a passage now found in the Epistle to the Romans; and manifestly taken from the book: ‡ (2) there are many sentences of St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians standing in Clement's epistle, without any sign of quotation, which yet certainly are quotations: (3) this method of adopting words of Scripture without acknowledgement, was a method in general use amongst the most ancient Christian writers.

But take it the other way, that Clement had heard these words from the apostles; with respect to the precise point of our argument, *viz.* that the Scriptures contain what the apostles taught, this supposition may serve almost as well.

* Compare Matt. v. 7. Luke vi. 37, 38. Matt. vii. 1, 2.

† Compare Matt. xviii. 6. Luke xvii. 2.

‡ Rom. i. 29.

III. Near the end of the Epistle to the Romans, St. Paul says amongst others "salute Hermas." Now there is a great probability that this Hermas, is the author of a book called "*The Shepherd of Hermas*," in which are many tacit allusions to the Gospels of Matthew, Luke, and John: nor does the weak character of this work detract from our argument, which only has to do with its age and that is rendered certain by quotations from it in Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian and Origen.

IV. Ignatius, who became bishop of Antioch, about 37 years after Christ's ascension, and who had probably known several of the apostles, in his Epistles undoubtedly alludes to the Gospels of Matthew and John, though without marks of quotation. Take the following as an instance.

"Christ was baptized of John, that *all righteousness might be fulfilled by him.*"

"*Be ye wise as serpents in all things, and harmless as a dove.*"*

V. Polycarp who had been taught by the apostles, and conversed with many who had seen Christ, in one short and undoubted Epistle has nearly forty clear allusions to books of the N. T. In one of these he clearly fixes the authority of the Lord's Prayer and its use among Christians: another is the following, which shews that the words of our Lord were at that early day quoted as spoken by him.

* Compare Matt. iii. 15. and x. 16.

“ But remembering what the Lord said, teaching, Judge not, that ye be not judged ; forgive, and ye shall be forgiven ; be ye merciful, that ye may obtain mercy ; with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.”*

VI. Papias, a hearer of John ascribes their respective Gospels to Matthew and Mark, and assuming this as a perfectly well known fact, tells us from what materials Mark collected his account—viz, from Peter’s preaching, and in what language Matthew wrote, viz, Hebrew. Hence it is certain whatever may be the character of Papias, that these books bore these names in his time.

VII. Justin Martyr, who came about 20 years after Papias, has in larger works than those before named, between twenty and thirty distinct and copious extracts from the Gospels and Acts.

What seems material to be observed is, that in all Justin’s works, from which might be extracted almost a complete life of Christ, there are but two instances, in which he refers to any thing as said or done by Christ, which is not related in our Gospels : this shows, that these Gospels, alone, were the authorities, from which the Christians of that day drew the information upon which they depended.

All the references are made without mentioning the author ; which proves that these books were notorious, and that there were no other accounts

* Compare Matt. vii. 1, 2. v. 7. Luke vi. 37, 38.

of Christ extant, or, at least, received and credited.

But though he mentions not the author's name, he calls the books, "*Memoirs composed by the Apostles and their Companions*;" which description exactly suits with the titles which the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles now bear.

VIII. Hegesippus, who came almost 30 years after Justin, observes, that travelling from Palestine to Rome, he found "in every succession and in every city that the same doctrine was taught, which the Law and the Prophets, and the *Lord* teacheth." An important attestation that by the term *Lord* was meant some writing containing the teaching of Christ, the only sense which combines with the preceding terms "the Law and the Prophets."

IX. At this time, viz. about the year 170, the churches of Lyons and Vienne, in France, sent a relation of their sufferings to the Churches of Asia. The epistle is preserved by Eusebius. Their bishop, Pothinus, was ninety years old, and his early life must have joined on with the times of the apostles. In this epistle are exact references to the Gospels of Luke and John, and to the Acts; the form the same as in all the preceding articles. That from St. John is in these words: "Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by the Lord, that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doeth God service."

X. The evidence now becomes full and clear. Irenæus succeeded Pothinus. In his youth he

had been a disciple of Polycarp, who was a disciple of John. The testimony which this writer affords to the authority and titles of the historical books of the N. T. is express, positive, and exclusive. One principal passage, in which this is contained, opens with a precise assertion of the point which we have laid down as the foundation of our argument, viz. that the story which the Gospels exhibit, is the story which the apostles told. "We have not received the knowledge of the way of our salvation by any others than those by whom the Gospel has been brought to us. Which Gospel they first preached, and afterwards, by the will of God, committed to writing, that it might be for time to come the foundation and pillar of our faith, &c."

But the testimony of Irenæus for our Gospels is *exclusive*. There is a remarkable passage in his works, in which, for some fanciful reasons, he endeavours to show, that there could be neither more nor fewer Gospels than *four*. With his *argument* we have no concern. The position itself proves that 4, and only 4, Gospels were at that time acknowledged. He mentions how Matthew begins his Gospel, how Mark begins and ends his, and their supposed reasons for so doing. He enumerates the several passages of Christ's history in Luke, which are not found in any of the other evangelists. He states the particular design with which Saint John composed his Gospel, and accounts for the doctrinal declarations which precede the narrative.

To the book of the Acts of the Apostles, its author, and credit, the testimony of Irenæus is no less explicit; and he refers to the account of Saint Paul's conversion and vocation, in the ninth chapter of that book.

Q. What remark suggests itself upon the references of this author to the Scriptures?

A. He has not one to any Apocryphal Christian writing whatever.

Q. How is the testimony of the above-mentioned writers strengthened?

A. By the observation, that it is the testimony, and the concurring testimony, of writers who lived in countries remote from one another, Clement flourished at Rome, Ignatius at Antioch, Polycarp at Smyrna, Justin Martyr in Syria, and Irenæus in France.

XI. Omitting Athenagoras and Theophilus, in the remaining works of the former of whom are clear references to Mark and Luke; and in those of the latter evident allusions to Matthew and John, observing also, that the works of two learned Christian writers of the same age, Miltiades and Pantænus are now lost; we come to one of the most voluminous of ancient Christian writers, Clement of Alexandria. He followed Irenæus at the distance of only 16 years, and therefore maintains the series of testimony in an uninterrupted continuation.

In certain of his works, quoted by Eusebius, there is a distinct account of the order in which the 4 Gospels were written. The Gospels which

contain the genealogies, were (he says) written first; Mark's next, at the instance of Peter's followers; and John's last: and this account he tells us he had received from presbyters of more ancient times.

In the works of Clement which remain, the four Gospels are repeatedly quoted by the names of their authors, and the Acts of the Apostles expressly ascribed to Luke.

XII. Tertullian joins on with Clement. The number of the Gospels then received, the names of the evangelists, and their proper descriptions, are exhibited by this writer in one short sentence:—"Among the *apostles*, John, and Matthew teach us the faith; among *apostolical men*, Luke and Mark refresh it."

He fixes the universality with which the Gospels were received, and their antiquity; that they were in the hands of all, and had been so from the first. He frequently cites the acts of the Apostles under that title, once calls it Luke's Commentary, and observes how Saint Paul's epistles confirm it.

XIII. In an interval of only 30 years, we have fragments and quotations from many authors, in every one of which is some reference to the Gospels, and in the works of Hippolytus (as preserved by Theodoret) is an abstract of the whole Gospel History. The declaration of Origen is peremptory when he says that "the four Gospels alone are received without dispute by the whole church of God under heaven," to which he subjoins a brief history of their respective authors.

His attestation to the Acts is no less positive, but he notices certain Apocryphal Gospels only to censure them.

XIV. Gregory of Neocæsarea, Dionysius of Alexandria, were scholars of Origen; their testimony therefore is but a repetition of his, though full and particular. Cyprian however, who flourished about 20 years after Origen, continues the chain of evidence by mention of the four Gospels and the Acts, and by copious citations of Scripture.

XV. In the next 40 years comes a crowd of writers, by whom the historical Scriptures of the N. T. are always cited with profound respect. Victorin, Bishop of Pettaw in Germany, is singled out, for the remoteness of his situation from that of Origen and Cyprian, who were Africans. In a commentary upon the *four beasts* in the Revelations, he makes out that the *four Gospels* are intended thereby. The explication is fanciful, but the testimony is positive.

XVI. Arnobius and Lactantius, about the year 300, composed formal arguments upon the credibility of the Christian religion. As these were addressed to Gentiles they abstain from quoting Christian books *by name*; but when they state the outlines of Christ's history, it is apparent that they draw their accounts from our gospels; for these statements exhibit a summary of almost every thing which is related of Christ's actions and miracles by the four evangelists.

XVII. We close the series of testimonies with

that of Eusebius, bishop of Cæsarea, who flourished in the year 315. This voluminous and diligent writer, beside a variety of other works, composed a history of Christianity from its origin to his own time. His testimony to the SS. is that of a man conversant in the works of Christian authors, written during the first centuries of its era, and who had read many which are now lost. In a passage of his *Evangelical Demonstration*, he remarks the delicacy of two of the evangelists, in their manner of noticing any circumstances which regarded themselves; and of Mark, as writing under Peter's direction, in the circumstances which regarded him. The illustration of this leads him to bring together long quotations from each of the evangelists; and the whole passage is a proof, that Eusebius, and the Christians of those days read the Gospels with attention and exactness. In a passage of his *Ecclesiastical History*, he treats, in form, and at large, of the occasions of writing the four Gospels, and of the order in which they were written. He shows that John wrote the last of the four, and that it was intended to supply the omissions of the others.

This learned author makes no use of Christian writings, forged with the names of Christ's apostles, or their companions.

We close this branch of our evidence here, because after Eusebius, the works of Christian writers are full of texts of Scripture, and references to it. Future testimonies to the books of Scripture could only prove, that they never lost their character or authority.

SECTION II.

When the Scriptures are quoted, or alluded to, they are quoted with peculiar respect, as books sui generis; as possessing an authority which belonged to no other books, and as conclusive in all questions and controversies amongst Christians.

Q. Besides the general strain of reference and quotation, which uniformly and strongly indicates this distinction, what may be regarded as specific testimonies.

A. I. Theophilus bishop of Antioch, the sixth in succession from the Apostles, quoting one of our Gospels, writes thus: "These things the Holy Scriptures teach us, and all who were moved by the Holy Spirit, among whom John says, In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God." Again: speaking of the Prophets and Gospels, he says, "that all, being inspired, spoke by one and the same Spirit of God."

II. A writer against Artemon, who may be supposed to come about 158 years after the publication of the SS. in a passage quoted by Eusebius, uses these expressions: "Possibly what they (our adversaries) say might have been credited, *if first of all* the Divine Scriptures did not contradict them; *and then* the writings of certain brethren more ancient than the times of Victor." Which

proves, first, that there was a collection called *Divine Scriptures*; secondly, that these were esteemed of higher authority than the writings of the most early and celebrated Christians.

III. In a piece ascribed to Hippolytus, who lived near the same time, the author professes, in giving to his correspondent instruction in the things about which he inquires, “to draw out of the *sacred fountain*.”

IV. “*Our* assertions and discourses,” saith Origen, “are unworthy of credit; we must receive the *Scriptures* as witnesses.” After treating of the duty of prayer, he proceeds with his argument thus: “What we have said, may be proved from the *Divine Scriptures*.”

V. Cyprian bishop of Carthage, whose age lies close to that of Origen, earnestly exhorts Christian teachers, in all doubtful cases, “to go back to the *fountain*; and, if the truth has in any case been shaken, to recur to the Gospels and apostolic writings.”

VI. Novatus, a Roman contemporary with Cyprian, appeals to the *Scriptures*, as the authority by which all errors were to be repelled, and disputes decided.

VII. At the distance of twenty years from the last writer, Anatolius, a learned Alexandrian, speaking of the rule for keeping Easter, says of those whom he opposed, “they can by no means prove their point by the authority of the *Divine Scripture*.”

VIII. The Arians, who sprung up about fifty

years after this, argued strenuously against the use of the words *consubstantial*, and *essence*, and like phrases ; “ *because they were not in Scripture.*” One of their advocates thus opens a conference with Augustine. “ If you allege any thing from the Divine Scriptures, which are common to both, I must hear. But unscriptural expressions deserve no regard.”

Athanasius, after having enumerated the books of the Old and New Testament adds, “ These are the fountain of salvation,” &c.

IX. Cyril bishop of Jerusalem, uses these remarkable words : “ Concerning the divine and holy mysteries of faith, not the least article ought to be delivered without the Divine Scriptures.” We are assured that Cyril’s Scriptures were the same as ours, for he has left us a catalogue of the books included under that name.

X. Epiphanius, twenty years after Cyril, challenges the Arians, and the followers of Origen, “ to produce any passage of the Old or New Testament, favouring their sentiments.”

XI. Pœbadius, a Gallic bishop, who lived about thirty years after the council of Nice, testifies, that “ the bishops of that council first consulted the sacred volumes, and then declared their faith.”

XII. Basil bishop of Cæsarea, says, “ that hearers instructed in the Scriptures ought to examine what is said by their teachers, and to embrace what is agreeable to the Scriptures, and to reject what is otherwise.”

XIII. Ephraim, the Syrian, a celebrated writer of the same times, bears this conclusive testimony to the proposition which forms the subject of our present chapter: "The truth written in the sacred volume of the Gospel, is a perfect rule. Nothing can be taken from it nor added to it, without great guilt."

XIV. If we add Jerome to these, it is only for the evidence which he affords of the judgment of preceding ages.

SECTION III.

The Scriptures were in very early times collected into a distinct volume.

Q. What proof may be adduced upon this head?

A. I. Ignatius, who had lived and conversed with the apostles, speaks of the Gospel and the Apostles in terms by which the books of the N. T. are implied, and again of the Gospel as opposed to the Prophets. We have direct proof in the writings of Clement of Alexandria, that these terms, the "Gospels" and "the Apostles" were names by which the writings of the N. T. were usually distinguished. It would appear also from Polycarp, that the term Gospel was used as the History of Christ and his doctrine.

II. Eusebius says that Quadratus and some others, the immediate successors of the Apostles, in their travels carried "the Gospels" with them, and delivered them to their converts; and this about 60 or 70 years after they were published; and probably they were in general use and esteem long before they were thus collected into a Volume.

III. Irenæus in the year 178 puts the Evangelic and Apostolic writings in connection with the Law and the Prophets, intending thereby the code of sacred Christian writings.

IV. Melito, Bishop of Sardis, speaks of procuring an accurate account of the books of the *Old Testament*; whence it is evident there must have been a collection of writings called the N. T.

V. We have the testimony of Clement of Alexandria:—"There is a consent and harmony between the Law and the Prophets, the Apostles and the Gospel."

VI. In the writings of his contemporary Tertullian, we have the same division: the whole volume is called the N. T., and the two parts the *Gospels* and *Apostles*.

VII. From many writers also of the third century, and especially from Cyprian, it is collected, that the Christian Scriptures were divided into two codes or volumes, one called the "Gospels, or Scriptures of the Lord," the other, the "Apostles, or Epistles of the Apostles."

VIII. Eusebius takes some pains to shew, that the Gospel of St. John had been justly placed by

the ancients “ the fourth in order and after the other three.” This is his proposition ; and it proves that the 4 Gospels had been collected into an exclusive volume ; and that their order had been adjusted with much consideration ; by those who were called *ancients* in his time.

In the Dioclesian persecution, A. D. 303, the Scriptures were sought out and burnt : many died rather than deliver them up ; and those who betrayed them, were accounted as apostates. On the other hand, Constantine, after his conversion, gave directions for multiplying copies of them, and adorning them at the expense of the treasury. What the Christians of that age so embellished in their prosperity, and, so tenaciously preserved under persecution, was the very volume of the N. T. which we now read.

SECTION IV.

Our Scriptures were soon distinguished by appropriate titles of respect.

Q. How is this proposition proved ?

A. I. Polycarp, says, “ I trust that ye are well exercised in the *Holy Scriptures* ; &c.” which passage is important ; because it proves that, in his time, there were Christian writings distin-

guished by the name of "Holy Scriptures," or *Sacred Writings*.

II. Justin Martyr, about 30 years after, expressly cites some of our present histories under the title of GOSPEL, as the name by which they were generally known.

III. Dionysius bishop of Corinth, 30 years after Justin, in a passage preserved in Eusebius, speaks "of the Scriptures of the Lord."

IV. By Irenæus, they are called "Divine Scriptures,"—"Divine Oracles,"—"Scriptures of the Lord," &c.

V. Saint Matthew's Gospel is quoted by Theophilus bishop of Antioch, under the title of the "Evangelic Voice;" and the works of Clement of Alexandria, ascribe to the books of the N. T. the titles of "Sacred books,"—"Divinely inspired Scriptures,"—"the true Evangelical Canon," &c.

VI. Tertullian, besides adopting most of the names above noticed, calls the Gospels "our Digesta," in allusion, as it should seem, to some collection of Roman laws then extant.

VII. By Origen, the same titles are applied to the Scriptures; and, in addition, he frequently speaks of the "Old and New Testament,"—"the Ancient and New Scriptures,"—"the Ancient and New Oracles."

VIII. In Cyprian, who was not twenty years later, they are "Books of the Spirit,"—"Divine Fountains,"—"Fountains of the Divine Fullness."

The expressions we have thus quoted, are evidences of high and peculiar respect. They all occur within two centuries from the publication of the books.

SECTION V.

Our Scriptures were publicly read and expounded in the Religious Assemblies of the early Christians.

Q. How does this appear?

A. I. Justin Martyr, in his first apology, speaks of “the *Memoirs of the Apostles*, or the writings of the Prophets, being *read* as the time allowed,” which memoirs in another place he calls, “the Gospels” and makes numerous quotations from them: he also speaks of this as a general usage and established custom of the Church.

II. Tertullian also says, “we come together to recollect the Divine Scriptures; we nourish our faith, raise our hope, confirm our trust, by the sacred word.”

III. Eusebius records of Origen that he was desired to expound the Scriptures publicly in the church of Palestine; and Origen himself bears witness to the same practice.

IV. Cyprian gives an account of his having himself ordained two persons, who were con-

fessors, to be readers of the Scriptures in the church.

V: Many intimations of the same custom exist in a great number of writers in the fourth century.—Augustine especially displays the benefit of the Christian religion on this very account, and declares the custom to be universal. “The Canonical Scriptures (says he) being read every where, the miracles therein recorded are well known to all people.”

Q. Does it appear that any other books beside our present Scriptures were then publicly read?

A. None except the Epistle of Clement, in the church of Corinth, to which it had been addressed, and the Shepherd of Hermas in many churches.

Q. Why does it not subtract much from our argument, that these two writings partly come within it?

A. Because we allow them to be the genuine writings of apostolical men.

SECTION VI.

Commentaries were anciently written upon the Scriptures; Harmonies formed out of them; different copies carefully collated; and Versions made of them into different Languages.

Q. What is shewn by the industry and attention paid to the holy Scriptures?

A. Their value and importance, which consisted entirely in their genuineness and truth.

Q. How does this industry and attention appear?

A. I. Tatian composed a harmony, or collation of the Gospels, which he called *Diatesseron*. "Of the four." The title is remarkable; showing that then, as now, there were 4, and only 4, Gospels in general use. And this was little more than 100 years after the publication of some of them.

II. Pantæus, a man of great learning, wrote many commentaries upon the Holy SS. which as Jerome testifies, were extant in his time.

III. Clement of Alexandria wrote short explications of many books of the Old and New Testament.

IV. Tertullian appeals from the authority of a later version, then in use, to the authentic Greek.

V. - An anonymous author, quoted by Eusebius, appeals to the *ancient copies* of the Scriptures in refutation of some corrupt readings.

VI. Eusebius mentions "the laudable industry of ancient and ecclesiastical men," in the interpretation of the SS.

VII. Julius Africanus wrote an epistle upon the apparent difference in the genealogies in Matthew and Luke.

Ammonius, a learned Alexandrian, composed, like Tatian, a harmony of *the four Gospels*: and, above both these, Origen, who wrote commentaries, or homilies, upon most of the books included in the N. T. and upon no other books but these.

VIII. In addition to these, the third century likewise contains

Dionysius of Alexandria, who compared, with great accuracy, the accounts in the four Gospels of the time of Christ's resurrection.

Victorin bishop of Pettaw in Germany, who wrote comments upon Saint Matthew's Gospel.

Lucian, a presbyter of Antioch; and Hesychius an Egyptian bishop, who put forth editions of the New Testament.

IX. The fourth century supplies 15 writers*

† Eusebius, A. D.	315	Didimus of Alex.	370
Juvenus, Spain, . . .	330	Gregory, Nyssen,	371
Theodore, Thrace, . .	334	Ambrose of Milan, . . .	374
Hilary, Poitiers, . . .	354	Diodore of Tarsus, . . .	378
Fortunatus,	360	Gaudent of Brescia, . .	387
Appollinarius of Laodicea,	362	Jerome,	392
Damasus, Rome, . . .	366	Theodore of Cilicia, . .	394
		Chrysostom,	398

upon the books of the N. T. amongst which it may be sufficient, for the purpose of showing the sentiments and studies of learned Christians of that age, to notice the following.

Eusebius wrote expressly upon the discrepancies in the Gospels, and likewise a treatise, in which he pointed out what things are related by four, what by three, what by two, and what by one evangelist.

Damasus, bishop of Rome, corresponded with St. Jerome upon the exposition of difficult texts of Scripture.

Gregory of Nyssen, at one time, appeals to the most exact copies of St. Mark's Gospel; at another time he compares together, and proposes to reconcile, the several accounts of the resurrection *given by the four Evangelists*.

Ambrose, bishop of Milan, remarked various readings in the Latin copies of the N. T. and appeals to the original Greek.

Jerome, towards the conclusion of this century, put forth an edition of the N. T. in Latin, corrected, at least as to the Gospels, by Greek copies, "and those (he says) *ancient*."

Lastly, Chrysostom delivered and published a great many homilies, or sermons, upon the Gospels and the Acts.

Q. Though it be needless to bring down this article lower, what is it of importance to add?

A. That there is no example of Christian writers of the first 3 centuries composing comments upon any other books than those found in

the N. T., except the single one of Clement of Alexandria commenting upon a book called the Revelation of Peter.

Q. Of the ancient versions of the N. T. which is one of the most valuable ?

A. The Syriac, that being the language of Palestine when Christianity was there first established ; as also that into which the Scriptures (though written in Greek) would soon be translated for the sake of greater circulation.

Q. What then appear in the Syriac translation now extant ?

A. Internal marks of high antiquity supported by the uniform tradition of the East, and confirmed by the discovery of many ancient manuscripts in the libraries of Europe.

Q. When did this translation become generally known to us ?

A. When a bishop of Antioch, about 200 years since, sent a copy into Europe to be printed.

Q. What was it found to contain ?

A. All our books, except the second epistle of Peter, the second and third of John, and the Revelation ; which books, however, have since been discovered in that language in some ancient manuscripts of Europe. But in this collection, no other book, beside what is in ours, appears ever to have had a place. And the text differs from ours very little, and in nothing that is important.

SECTION VII.

Our Scriptures were received by ancient Christians of different sects and persuasions, by many Heretics as well as Catholics, and were usually appealed to by both sides in the controversies which arose in those days.

Q. What were the three most ancient topics of controversy among Christians ?

A. The authority of the Jewish institution, the origin of evil, and the nature of Christ.

Q. Amidst the disputes which these subjects occasioned, what is it a great satisfaction to perceive ?

A. What, in a vast plurality of instances, we do perceive, *viz.* all sides recurring to the same Scriptures.

Q. What instances may be adduced to prove our proposition at the head of this section ?

A. I. Basilides, who lived about A. D. 120. He rejected the Jewish institution, and advanced a system of theology widely different from Christianity ; but he admitted the Gospel of St. Matthew, whilst there is no proof that he rejected the other three.

II. The Valentinians, about the same time, whose heresy consisted in certain notions con-

cerning angelic natures, according to Irenæus, (who wrote A. D. 172.) endeavoured to fetch arguments for their opinions from the evangelic and apostolic writings.

III. The Carpocratians, who in some of their opinions resembled what we call Socinians, are charged, by Irenæus and Epiphanius, with endeavouring to pervert a passage in Matthew, which is a positive proof that they received that Gospel.

IV. The Sethians, A. D. 150 ; the Montanists, A. D. 156 ; the Marcosians, A. D. 160 ? Hermogenes, A. D. 180 ; Praxias, A. D. 196 ; Artemon, A. D. 200 ; Theodotus, A. D. 200 ; all being engaged in controversies with Catholic Christians, received the Scriptures of the N. T.

V. Tatian, who lived A. D. 172, and was the founder of a sect called Encratites, so received the four Gospels, as to compose a harmony from them.

VI. From a writer quoted by Eusebius, of about the year 200, it is apparent that they who at that time contended for the mere humanity of Christ, argued from the Scriptures ; for they are accused by this writer, of making alterations in their copies, to favour their opinions.

VII. Origen's sentiments excited great controversies ; yet both the advocates and adversaries of his opinions acknowledged the same authority of Scripture. In his time, many dissensions subsisted amongst Christians, with which they were reproached by Celsus ; yet Origen, who has

recorded this accusation, testifies, that the four Gospels were received, *without dispute*, by the whole church of God under heaven.

VIII. Paul of Samosata, so distinguished himself in the controversy concerning the nature of Christ, as to be the subject of two councils or synods, assembled at Antioch upon his opinions. Yet he is not charged with rejecting any book of the New Testament.

IX. A controversy at the same time existed with the Noëtians or Sabellians, who seem to have gone into the opposite extreme from that of Paul of Samosata and his followers. Yet, according to the express testimony of Epiphanius, Sabellius received all the Scriptures.

X. As a general testimony may be produced what was said by a bishop in the council of Carthage, holden a little before this time:—"I am of opinion that blasphemous and wicked heretics, who *pervert* the sacred and adorable words of the SS. should be execrated." Undoubtedly what they perverted, they received.

XI. The Millennium, Novatianism, the baptism of heretics, the keeping of Easter, engaged also the attention of Christians at that time, showing how much men were in earnest upon the subject; yet every one appealed for the grounds of his opinion to Scriptural authority.

XII. The Donatists, who sprung up in the year 328, used the same Scriptures as we do. "Produce," saith Augustine, "some proof from

the Scriptures, whose authority is common to us both."

XIII. It is notorious, that, in the Arian controversy, which arose soon after the year 300, both sides appealed to the same Scriptures, and with equal professions of deference and regard. They and the Athanasians mutually accuse each other of using *unscriptural* phrases ; which was a mutual acknowledgment of the conclusive authority of Scripture.

XIV. The Priscillianists, A.D. 378, the Pelagians, A. D. 405, received the same Scriptures as we do.

XV. Chrysostom, who lived near the year 400, positively affirms the proposition we maintain. "The general reception of the Gospels is a proof that their history is true and consistent ; for, since the writing of the Gospels, many heretics have arisen, holding opinions contrary to what is contained in them, who yet receive the Gospels either entire or in part." We need not be moved by what may seem a deduction from his testimony, the words, "entire or in part ;" for, if all the parts which were ever questioned in our Gospels were given up, it would not affect the miraculous origin of the religion in the smallest degree.

Q. Of all the ancient Heretics who was the most extraordinary ?

A. Marcion, who flourished about the year 130.

Q. What did he do with regard to the N. T. ?

A. Rejecting the Old Testament, he expunged

from the New all the passages which recognized the Jewish Scriptures; yet this wild and rash controversialist published a chastised edition of St. Luke's Gospel. He never charged the Christians with forging their books upon many of which he comments.

Q. How does Dr. Lardner in his general review sum up this head of evidence?

A. "Noëtus, Paul of Samosata, Sabellius, Marcellus, Photinus, the Novatians, Donatists, Manicheans, Priscillianists, beside Artemon, the Audians, the Arians, and divers others, all received most or all the same books of the New Testament which the Catholics received: and agreed in a like respect for them as written by apostles, or their disciples and companions.

SECTION VIII.

The four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, thirteen Epistles of Saint Paul, the first of John, and the First of Peter, were received without doubt by those who doubted concerning the other books which are included in our present canon.

Q. Why does Paley state this proposition?

A. Because, if made out, it shows that the authenticity of their books was a subject amongst

the early Christians of consideration ; and that, where there was cause of doubt, they did doubt ; which strengthens very much their testimony to such books as were received.

Q. What testimonies does he bring forward in support of it ?

A. I. Jerome, in his account of Caius, a presbyter of Rome, near the year 200, records of him, that, reckoning up only 13 epistles of Paul, he rejects the fourteenth, to the Hebrews : and then Jerome adds, “ With the Romans to this day it is not looked upon as Paul’s.” Eusebius also says, “ indeed to this very time, by *some* of the Romans, that epistle is not thought to be the apostle’s.”

II. Origen about 20 years after Caius, confesses his own doubts and those of others concerning the same Epistles, as also the second of Peter and the third of John, but expressly witnesses that the four Gospels “ were received without dispute by the whole church of God under heaven.” He also quotes as *undoubted* the Acts of the apostles, and Paul’s first Epistle to the Thessalonians.

III. Dionysius of Alexandria, A. D. 247, doubts concerning the Book of Revelation, but he uses and collates the four Gospels as of undoubted authority.

IV. But the most important testimony on this head are two remarkable passages in Eusebius’ Eccles. History ; the first of which declares the Gospel of St. John to be *uncontradicted* and ac-

known by all. He then proceeds to speak of the occasions of writing all the Gospels, and why that of John was placed last, thus acknowledging the equal authority of the rest. The second passage* is from a chapter entitled “ of the SS. *universally acknowledged*, and of those that are not such.” In the first place he ranks the four Gospels, the Acts, and the Epistles of Paul : in the next, that called the first Epistle of John, and the first of Peter, to be esteemed authentic : after this he places the Revelation of John, of which are different opinions ; of the controverted books, but yet well known or approved of most, according to his account, is that called the Epistle of James, that of Jude, the second of Peter, and the second and third of John, whether they be written by the Evangelist, or another of the same name : he then proceeds to mention five others, not in our canon, as spurious or controverted.

Q. Now what is manifest from this passage ?

A. Not only that the four Gospels, and the Acts, (with which our concern principally lies), were acknowledged without dispute, even by those who raised objections about other parts of the SS. but that the author was very conversant in writings of the Christians, published from the first ages down to his own time ; and from which he drew his knowledge of the character and reception of the books in question.

* See Lardner, vol. viii. p. 39.

The opinion both of Eusebius and his contemporaries appears to have been founded upon the testimony of writers whom they *then* called ancient: and we may observe, that such of the works of those writers as have come down to our times, entirely confirm the judgment, and support the distinction which Eusebius proposes.

SECTION IX.

Our Historical Scriptures were attacked by the early adversaries of Christianity, as containing the accounts upon which the Religion was founded.

Q. What testimonies are produced on this head?

A. I. Near the middle of the 2nd century, Celsus, a heathen philosopher, wrote a treatise against Christianity; of which, though it be lost, very many passages are most faithfully preserved in the work of Origen, who answered it almost 50 years after.

Celsus, or the Jew whom he personates, says; —“I could say many things concerning the affairs of Jesus: and those, too, different from what is written by the disciples of Jesus but I purposely omit them.” From this passage it is not easy to believe, that if Celsus could have contradicted

the disciples in any material point, he would have omitted to do so.

It proves however, that in his time those books were well known, and allowed to be written by the disciples of Jesus.

In another passage, Celsus, accuses the Christians of altering the Gospel, which shows, that, although objections were taken by the adversaries of the religion to the integrity of these books, none were made to their genuineness.

In a third passage, Celsus thus argues:—
“ These things then we have alleged to you out of *your own writings*, not needing any other weapons.” Whence it is manifest that the books over which he affects to triumph, had an authority by which Christians confessed themselves to be bound.

That the books to which Celsus refers were no other than our present Gospels, is made out by his allusions to various passages still found in these Gospels.

It is very material to remark, that Celsus not only refers to the accounts of Christ contained in the 4 Gospels, but that he refers to no other ; that he founds none of his objections upon any thing in spurious Gospels.

II. What Celsus was in the second century, Porphyry became in the third. His large and formal treatise against Christianity is not extant ; but we can gather his objections from Christian writers, who have noticed, in order to answer them ; and enough remains to prove completely, that

Porphyry's animadversions were directed against the contents of our present Gospels and of the Acts ; considering that to overthrow *them* was to overthrow the religion. Speaking to the Christians concerning Matthew, he calls him *your* Evangelist.

III. A third great writer against Christianity was the emperor Julian, about a century after Porphyry.

In long extracts, transcribed from his work by Cyril and Jerome, it appears, that Julian noticed *by name* Matthew and Luke, in the difference between their genealogies of Christ ; that he objected to Matthew's application of the prophecy, " Out of Egypt have I called my son," (ii. 15.) and to that of " A virgin shall conceive," (i. 23.) ; that he recited sayings of Christ, and various passages of his history, in the very words of the evangelists : by quoting the four Gospels and the Acts and no other, Julian shows that these were the only historical books received by Christians as authentic memoirs of Jesus Christ, of his apostles, and of their doctrines. It discovers also his own judgment of them. He expressly states the early date of these records ; he calls them by the names they now bear ; and he nowhere attempts to question their genuineness.

Q. What principal argument do you summarily draw in favour of the Books of the N. T., from the notice taken of them by the writers against Christianity ?

The argument is very considerable. It proves.

that the accounts which Christians had then, were the accounts we have now ; that our present Scriptures were theirs ; that neither Celsus in the 2nd, Porphyry in the 3rd, nor Julian in the 4th century questioned their authenticity or genuineness, or expressed an opinion on this subject different from Christians : and when we consider how much it would have availed them to have cast a doubt over it, and that they were all men of learning and inquiry, their concession, upon the subject is extremely valuable

SECTION X.

Formal catalogues of authentic Scriptures were published, in all of which our present Sacred Histories were included.

Q. Why does this species of evidence come later than the rest ?

A. Because catalogues of any particular class of books would not be put forth until Christian writings became numerous ; or until some appeared claiming titles which did not belong to them, and rendering it necessary to separate books of authority from others. But, when it does come, it is very satisfactory ; the catalogues, though numerous, and made in countries at a wide distance from one another, differing in nothing

which is material, and all containing the four Gospels. To this last article there is no exception.

Q. What authorities may be enumerated on this head ?

A. Origen A. D. 230, Athanasius about a century later, Cyril (who omits the book of Revelation) about 20 years after Athanasius ; and 15 years after Cyril, the Council of Laodicea delivered an authoritative catalogue of canonical Scripture like Cyril's, and the same as *ours* with the omission of the " Revelation."

Q. After this what is to be remarked of catalogues ?

A. They became frequent. Within 30 years after the last date, we have them by Epiphanius, by Gregory Nazianzen, by Philaster bishop of Brescia in Italy, by Amphilochius bishop of Iconium, all, as they are sometimes called, *clean* catalogues (that is, they admit no books but what we now receive), and all, for every purpose of historic evidence, the same as ours.

Jerome, also, the most learned writer of his age, delivered a catalogue of the books of the N. T., recognizing every book now received, with the intimation of a doubt concerning the epistle to the Hebrews alone, and taking not the least notice of any book which is not now received.

The same did his contemporary, Saint Augustine, in Africa : so also did another contemporary, Rufen, presbyter of Aquileia, whose catalogue, like theirs, is perfect and unmixed, and concludes

with these remarkable words: "These are the volumes which the fathers have included in the canon, and out of which they would have us prove the doctrine of our faith."

SECTION XI.

These Propositions cannot be predicated of any of those books which are commonly called Apocryphal Books of the New Testament.

Q. What is the principal advantage of proving this proposition?

A. Because many, hearing that various Gospels existed in ancient times, may conceive that the selection of our present Gospels, was rather an arbitrary or accidental choice, than founded in any clear and certain cause of preference.

Q. What observations may be addressed to such persons?

A. It may be observed, (1) That, besides our Gospels and the Acts, no Christian History, claiming to be written by an *Apostle* or *Apostolic man*, is quoted by any known writer within three hundred years after the birth of Christ*. (2) Of

* If there seem to be any exception to this observation, it is a Hebrew Gospel, which was circulated under the various titles

Apocryphal writings *two* only are noticed by any author of the three first centuries, without express terms of condemnation. We may also observe :—

1. That there is no evidence that any spurious or apocryphal books existed in the first century, in which all our historical books are proved to have been extant.

2. These apocryphal writings were not read in the churches of Christians ;

3. Were not admitted into their volume ;

4. Do not appear in their catalogues ;

5. Were not noticed by their adversaries ?

6. Were not alleged by different parties as of authority in their controversies ;

7. Were not the subjects, amongst them, of commentaries, versions, collations, expositions.

Finally ; They were, with a consent nearly universal, reprobated by Christian writers of succeeding ages.

Q. What further may be said of these Books ?

A. Although they never obtained any degree

of the Gospel according to the Hebrews, the Gospel of the Nazarenes, of the Ebionites, sometimes called of the Twelve, by some ascribed to Saint Matthew. This Gospel is *once*, and only *once*, cited by Clemens Alexandrinus, in the latter part of the second century, which same Clemens quotes one or other of our four Gospels in almost every page of his work. It is also twice mentioned by Origen, A. D. 230 ; and both times with marks of diminution and discredit. And this is the ground upon which the exception stands. But what is still more material is, that this Gospel, in the main, agreed with our present Gospel of Saint Matthew.

of credit which can place them in competition with our SS.; yet many existed in the fourth century, and in that preceding it.

Perhaps the most probable account of their origin may be, that they were in general composed with a view to profit by their sale: and that hence they were many of them adapted to the opinions of particular sects. After all, they were probably much more obscure than we imagine. Except the Gospel according to the Hebrews, there is none of which we hear more than the Gospel of the Egyptians; yet there is reason to believe that Clement of Alexandria, a man of vast reading, had never seen it.

It is also observable of all these writings, *viz.* that they proceed upon the same fundamental history of Christ and his apostles as that in our Scriptures.

CHAP. X.

RECAPITULATION.

Q. What are the two points which form the subject of our present discussion?

A. *First*, that the Founder of Christianity, his associates, and immediate followers, passed their lives in labours, and sufferings; *secondly*, that they did so, in attestation of the miraculous

history recorded in our SS., and solely in consequence of their belief in them.

Q. How is the first point made out?

A. The nature of the undertaking ; the character of the persons employed in it ; the opposition of their tenets to the fixed opinions and expectations of their country ; their undissembled condemnation of all other religions ; their total want of power, and authority ; render this in the highest degree probable. The probability is increased, by what we know of the fate of the Founder, and the cruel treatment of the first converts : both which points are attested by Heathen writers, and leave it very incredible that the primitive emissaries, who exercised their ministry amongst the people who had destroyed their Master, and those who persecuted their converts, should themselves escape with impunity. This probability, thus sustained by foreign testimony, is advanced, to historical certainty, by the evidence of our own books ; by the accounts of one who was the companion of those whose sufferings he relates ; by the letters of the persons themselves ; by predictions of persecutions ascribed to the Founder of the religion, which would not have been inserted in his history, much less studiously dwelt upon, if they had not accorded with the event, and which, even if falsely ascribed to him, could only have been so ascribed, because the event suggested them ; lastly, by incessant exhortations to fortitude and patience, and by an earnestness, repetition, and urgency upon the sub-

ject, which must have been suggested by some extraordinary call for the exercise of these virtues.

It is made out also, with sufficient evidence, that both the teachers and converts of the religion, in consequence of their new profession, took up a new course of life and behaviour.

Q. How is the second point made out ?

A. For the fundamental article of Christianity, the designation of the person, *viz.* that Jesus of Nazareth, ought to be received as the *Messiah*, they could have nothing but miracles to stand upon. That the exertions and sufferings of the apostles were *for* the story we have now, is proved by its being transmitted to us by two of their own number, and by two others personally connected with them ; with a particularity and circumstantial information arising from their situation, which gave them a certainty of knowing what their colleagues, companions, and masters taught ; that each of these books contains enough to prove the truth of Christianity ; that, if any one of them therefore be genuine, it is sufficient ; that the genuineness, however, of all is made out, as well by general arguments, as by peculiar and specific proofs, *viz.* by citations from them in writings contiguous to their date ; by the regard paid by early Christians to their authority ; by an universal agreement with respect to *these* books, though doubts were entertained concerning some others ; by contending sects appealing to them ; by early adversaries treating them as the authentic depositaries of the

history ; by many formal catalogues, published in different and distant parts of the Christian world ; lastly, by the absence or defect of the above-cited topics of evidence, when applied to any other histories of the same subject.

Q. What are these strong arguments to prove ?

A. That the books actually proceeded from the authors whose names they bear, and have always borne.

Q. Why is the strict genuineness of the Books more perhaps than is necessary to the support of our proposition ?

A. Even supposing that, by the silence of antiquity, or loss of records, we knew not the writers of the 4 Gospels, yet the fact, that they were received as authentic by Christians, at or near the age of the apostles, by those whom the apostles had taught, and by societies which they had founded ; this fact, I say, connected with the consideration, that they corroborate each other's testimony, and are further corroborated by another contemporary history, which takes up the story where they had left it, and, in a narrative built upon that story, accounts for the production of changes in the world, the effects of which subsist at this day ; connected, moreover, with a confirmation from letters written by the apostles themselves, assuming the same general story, and alluding to particular parts of it ; and connected also with the reflection, that if the apostles delivered any different story, it is lost, (the present and no other being referred to by Christian wri-

ters,) and that so great a change as the oblivion of one story and the substitution of another, under such circumstances, could not have taken place; this evidence would be sufficient to prove concerning these books, that, whoever were the authors of them, they exhibit the real story which the apostles told, and for which, consequently, they acted, and suffered.

If this be so, the religion must be true. These men could not be deceivers. By only not bearing testimony, they might have avoided all their sufferings. Would men in such circumstances pretend to have seen what they never saw; assert facts of which they had no knowledge; go about lying, to teach virtue; and, though not only convinced of Christ's being an impostor, but having seen the success of his imposture in his crucifixion, yet persist in carrying it on; and so persist, as to bring upon themselves, for nothing, and with a full knowledge of the consequence, enmity, danger and death?

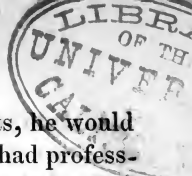
CHAP. I.

PROPOSITION II.

Our second Proposition, and which now remains to be treated of, is, "*That there is NOT satisfactory evidence, that persons pretending to be original witnesses of any other similar miracles, have acted in the same manner, in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and solely in consequence of their belief in the truth of those accounts.*"

Q. Before entering upon this part of his argument, Paley gives several instances to shew how far his belief in miraculous accounts goes. Can you quote some of the most striking of these?

A. If the reformers in the time of Wickliffe, or of Luther; or those of England in the time of Henry the Eighth, or of Queen Mary; if the founders of certain religious sects, such as Mr. Whitefield and Mr. Westley, had undergone their life of toil, danger and sufferings, *for* a miraculous story; that is if they had founded their ministry upon the allegation of miracles wrought within their own knowledge, and upon narratives which could not be resolved into delusion or mistake; and if it had appeared, that their conduct



really had its origin in these accounts, he would have believed them. Or, if Socrates had professed to perform public miracles at Athens ; if his friends and followers, relying upon such an attestation to his pretensions, had, at the hazard of their lives, and expence of their tranquillity, gone about Greece, after his death, to publish his doctrines ; and if these things had come to our knowledge in the same way as the life of Socrates is now transmitted to us, by writings received without doubt as those of his disciples from that age to the present, he would have believed this likewise.

Q. And how, according to Paley, would his belief in each case be strengthened ?

A. If the subject of the mission were of great importance ; if it testified any thing which it behoved mankind to know from *such authority* ; if its nature required the sort of proof which it alleged ; if the end was worthy of the means ; and if the effects of the transaction *remained* ; if a change had been wrought, at the time, in the opinions and conduct of such numbers, as to found an institution, which had since overspread the greatest part of the civilized world—he would have believed, the testimony, in these cases : yet none of them do more than come up to the apostolic history.

Q. In comparing our evidence with that of our adversaries, into how many kinds does Paley divide the distinctions which he proposes ?

A. Into two : those which relate to the *proof*, and those which relate to the *miracles*.

Q. Under the former head what may be put out of the case ?

A. I. Such accounts of supernatural events as are found only in histories by some ages posterior to the transaction. Ours is contemporary history. This difference alone removes out of our way the miraculous history of Pythagoras, who lived 500 years before the Christian era; the prodigies of Livy; the fables of the heroic ages; the whole of the Greek, Roman, and Gothic mythology, and a great part of the legends of Popish saints. It applies also with considerable force to the miracles of Apollonius Tyaneus; and to some of the miracles of the third century.

II. We may lay out of the case, accounts published in one country, of what passed in a distant country, without any proof that such accounts were known or received at home. In our case, the scene of the transaction, was the centre of the mission. The church of Christ was first planted at Jerusalem, and others corresponded with it. From thence the primitive teachers went forth; thither they assembled. The churches of Jerusalem and of Judea, subsisted for many ages; received also the same books, and the same accounts, as other churches did.

This distinction disposes of the miracles of Appollonius Tyaneus, most of which are related to have been performed in India; no evidence

remaining that they, or their history were ever heard of in India : also those of Francis Xavier, the Indian missionary, with many others of the Romish breviary.

III. We lay out of the case *transient* rumours. Any man may publish any story. It is in its future confirmation, its permanency, its increasing notoriety ; its being followed up by subsequent and independent accounts—that solid truth is distinguished from fugitive lies : and this distinction is altogether on the side of Christianity.

IV. We may lay out of the case *naked* history. If the prodigies of the Jewish history had been found only in fragments of Manetho, or Berossus ; if we knew nothing of the fact, but from the fragment ; if we had no proof that these accounts had been credited and acted upon, from times, probably, as ancient as the accounts themselves ; if we had no visible effects connected with the history, no subsequent or collateral testimony to confirm it ; it would be undeserving of credit. But this is not our case. In appreciating the evidence of Christianity, the books are to be combined with the institution ; with the prevalency of the religion at this day ; with the time and place of its origin ; with its rise and progress, as collected from external history ; with the fact of our present books being received by its votaries from the beginning ; with that of other books coming after these, filled with accounts of its effects and consequences ; lastly, with the number and variety of the books themselves, their different

writers, their different views so disagreeing as to repel the suspicion of confederacy, so agreeing as to show that they were founded in a common original. Whether this proof be satisfactory or not, it is a cumulation of evidence, not a naked or solitary record.

V. A mark of historical truth, although only in a certain way, and to a certain degree, is *particularity* in names, dates, places, circumstances, and in the order of events preceding or following the transaction; such is the description of St. Paul's voyage and shipwreck, and the account of the cure and examination of the blind man, in the 9th chapter of St. John's Gospel.

VI. We lay out of the case such stories as require an idle assent only; stories upon which nothing depends, in which no interest is involved, nothing is to be done or changed in consequence of believing them like vulgar errors and popular superstitions. But not of this kind were the alleged miracles of Christ and his apostles. They decided, if true, the most important of questions. They claimed to regulate the opinions of mankind, upon subjects in which they are not only deeply concerned, but usually refractory and obstinate. Whoever entertained the account, could not avoid the following reflection:—"If these things be true, I must give up the opinions and principles in which I have been brought up, the religion in which my fathers lived and died." It is not conceivable that a man should do this upon any idle report or frivolous account. But also, they who

believed Christianity, acted upon it. Many made it the business of their lives to publish the intelligence. It was required of those who admitted that intelligence, to change their conduct, principles, habits and gratifications, and to begin a new system of life. The Apostles, at least, were interested not to sacrifice their ease, and their lives for an idle tale ; multitudes beside them were induced, by the same tale, to encounter opposition, danger and sufferings.

VII. We also lay out of the case those accounts which come merely *in affirmance* of opinions already formed. Popish miracles happen in Popish countries : they make no converts : which proves that stories are accepted, when they fall in with principles already fixed, with the public sentiments, or those of a party, which stories would not be produced in the face of enemies, in opposition to favourite tenets or prejudices, or when the belief must draw men away from their preconceived opinions, modes of life, and rules of action. In the former case, men may not only receive a miraculous account, but may both act and suffer in the cause which the miracle supports, yet not act or suffer for the miracle, but in pursuance of a prior persuasion. The miracle, only confirming what was before believed, is admitted with little examination. It is *change* which requires a cause. Men are easily fortified in their old opinions, but driven from them with great difficulty. Now, how does this apply to the Christian history ? The miracles, there recorded,

were wrought in the midst of enemies, under a government, a priesthood, and a magistracy, vehemently adverse to them, and to their pretensions. They were as Protestant miracles in a Popish country; or Popish miracles in the midst of Protestants. They produced a change, established a society, and made converts, who gave up to the testimony their most favourite opinions and prejudices. They who so acted and suffered, did so *for* the miracles: for there was no prior reverence, prejudice, or partiality to take hold of. Jesus had not one follower when he set up his claim. His miracles gave birth to his sect. No part of this description belongs to the ordinary evidence of Heathen or Popish miracles. Even most of those alleged to have been performed by Christians, in the 2nd and 3rd century want this confirmation. It constitutes a line of partition between the *origin* and the *progress* of Christianity. Frauds and fallacies might mix themselves with the progress, which could not possibly take place in the commencement of the institution. What should suggest to its first propagators, such a thought as that of changing the religion of the world? What could bear them through the difficulties of the attempt? What could procure any degree of success? are questions which apply, with great force, to the setting out of the institution—with less, to every future stage of it.

Q. In APPRECIATING the credit of any miraculous story, these are distinctions which relate to the evidence. There are others, of great moment,

which relate to the miracles themselves. Of this latter kind which ought carefully to be retained?

I. A. It is not necessary to admit as a miracle, what can be resolved into a *false perception*; as the demon of Socrates; the visions of St. Anthony, that of Lord Herbert of Cherbury, and of Colonel Gardiner. All these may be accounted for by a momentary insanity. They are, for the most part, cases of visions or voices. The object is hardly ever touched. One sense does not confirm another. They are almost always cases of a *solitary* witness; *momentary* miracles, unattended with permanent effects. But if a person born blind be restored to sight, or a dead man to life, here is a permanent effect produced: the change was instantaneous, but the proof continues: and of this kind are by far the greater part of the miracles of the N. T. When Lazarus was raised from the dead, he did not merely move, speak, and die again; or come out of the grave, and vanish. He returned to his home, and there continued; visited by multitudes, as a subject of curiosity; and giving so much uneasiness to the Jewish rulers as to beget in them a design of destroying him. When the cripple was suddenly cured by Peter, he did not relapse into his former lameness, or disappear out of the city; but boldly and honestly produced himself along with the apostles, when they were brought next day before the Jewish council. Here, though the miracle was sudden, the proof was permanent.

Q. What other cases may there be?

A. Those of a mixed nature, in which, though the principal miracle be momentary, some circumstance connected with it may be permanent.

Q. What instances can you adduce of this kind?

A. St. Paul's conversion. The sudden light and voice, were momentary: but Paul's consequent blindness, the communication made to Ananias by an independent vision; Ananias finding out Paul in consequence; and Paul's recovery of his sight upon Ananias's laying his hands upon him; these are circumstances, which take the principal miracle entirely out of the case of momentary ones, or of such as may be accounted for by false perceptions. The same may be observed of Peter's vision, and of its connexion with what was imparted in a distant place to Cornelius. Either communication, taken separately, might be a delusion; the concurrence of the two could not happen without a supernatural cause.

II. Q. It is not necessary to bring into the comparison what may be called tentative miracles, *i. e.* where, out of a great many trials, some succeed. To what does this observation apply?

A. To the ancient oracles and auguries, in which a single coincidence of the event with the prediction, is talked of and magnified, whilst failures are forgotten, suppressed, or accounted for: also to cures by relics, and at the tombs of saints, or to the boasted efficacy of the king's touch. Now there is nothing which can even allow us to believe that Christ attempted cures in many

instances, and succeeded in a few ; or that he ever made the attempt in vain. When he said that “ many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet, and none of them was cleansed saving Naaman the Syrian,” He meant that it was not the nature of a divine interposition, or necessary to its purpose, to be general ; still less to answer every challenge, and teach men to put their faith solely upon these experiments.

III. Q. What other accounts may be dismissed from the question ?

A. All those in which, allowing the phenomenon to be real, and the fact true, it still remains *doubtful* whether a miracle were wrought. This is the case with the ancient history of what is called the thundering legion, of the obstructions to the rebuilding of the temple by Julian, the circling of the flames and fragrant smell at the martyrdom of Polycarp, Constantine’s dream and consequent victory, &c. It is also the case with the modern annual exhibition of the liquefaction of the blood of Saint Januarius at Naples. This distinction also applies to the supernatural cure of hypochondriacal and nervous complaints, like the miracles of the second and third century.

IV. Q. What else may be referred nearly to the same head of objection ?

A. Accounts, in which the variation of a small circumstance may have transformed some extraordinary appearance, or coincidence of events, into a miracle ; stories, which may be resolved

into exaggeration. Total fiction will account for any thing; but no exaggeration that has any parallel in other histories, no force of fancy could produce the narratives we now have. The feeding of the five thousand with a few loaves and fishes, surpasses all bounds of exaggeration. The raising of Lazarus, of the widow's son at Nain, &c., come not within the compass of misrepresentation; *i. e.* it is impossible to assign any accidental effects, any natural singularity, which could supply foundation to these accounts.

Q. These exceptions which may be taken to miracles being considered, what general observations may we apply to the SS.

A. That though there be miracles recorded in the N. T. which fall within some or other of these exceptions, yet that they are united with others, to which none of the same exceptions extend, and that their credibility stands upon this union. Thus St. Paul's pretensions to visions and revelations were attested by external miracles wrought by himself, and by miracles wrought in the cause to which these visions relate. Again, some of Christ's own miracles were *momentary*; but this is not the case of all the miracles ascribed to Christ, nor with the greatest part, nor with *many*. Whatever force therefore there may be in the objection, we have numerous miracles which are free from it. And thus the unexampled number and variety of the miracles ascribed to Christ strengthens the credibility of Christianity. For

it precludes any solution, or conjecture, which imagination, or even experience, might suggest concerning some particular miracles, if considered independently of others.

CHAP. II.

Q. But as they, with whom we argue, have a right to select their own examples; with what instances does Mr. Hume confront the miracles of the New Testament, and which, therefore, may be regarded as the strongest which history could supply to a very acute and learned adversary?

I. A. The cure of a blind and of a lame man at Alexandria, by the emperor Vespasian, as related by Tacitus;

II. The restoration of the limb of an attendant in a Spanish church, as told by cardinal de Retz; and,

III. The cures said to have been performed at the tomb of the abbé Paris, in the early part of the eighteenth century.

Q. What is the narrative of Tacitus summarily stated?

A. That Vespasian cured the above-mentioned inhabitants of Alexandria, at their own earnest request, urged by the admonition of the God Serapis; and that he did this with the advice of the physicians, and in the presence of many people.

Q. Now though Tacitus wrote this account at

Rome, 27 years after the miracle is said to have been performed and wrote from report, probably without examining the story, what does Paley think of his testimony?

A. That it is sufficient to prove that such a transaction took place: or that the two men in question did apply to Vespasian; that Vespasian did touch the deceased in the manner related; and that a cure was reported to have followed the operation.

Q. But nevertheless what strong and just suspicion does the affair labour under?

A. That it was a concerted imposture, a collusion between the patients, the physician and the emperor. This solution is probable, because there was every thing to suggest, and to facilitate, such a scheme. The miracle was calculated to confer honour upon the emperor, and upon the god Serapis. It was achieved in the midst of the emperor's flatterers and followers; in a city devoted to his interest and to the worship of the god.

Q. Is it probable that Tacitus himself believed this miracle?

A. The terms in which he speaks of Serapis, scarcely suffer us to suppose that he thought it real: "By the admonitions of the god Serapis, whom that superstitious nation (*dedita superstitionibus gens*) worship above all other gods."

Q. To have brought this supposed miracle within the limits of comparison with those of Christ; what ought to have been shewn?

A. That a person of a private station, in the

midst of enemies, against the whole power and prejudice of the country, pretended to perform these cures, and required the spectators, upon the strength of what they saw, to give up their firmest hopes and opinions, and follow *him* through a life of trial and danger; that many did so obey his call, and that by these beginnings, a change was produced in the world, the effect of which remains to this day.

II. Q. What is the story taken from Cardinal Retz's memoirs?

A. "In the church of Saragossa in Spain, (says he) the canons showed me a man whose business it was to light the lamps; telling me, that he had been several years at the gate with one leg only. I saw him with two."

Q. How may this be answered?

A. It is stated by Mr. Hume, that the cardinal, did not believe the story; and it no where appears, that he examined the limb, or asked a single question about the matter. An artificial leg would be sufficient, in such a place, to give origin and currency to the report: the ecclesiastics would probably favour the story, and if *they* patronized it, no person at Saragossa, in the middle of the last century, would care to dispute it

III. Q. What solution do the miracles said to have been performed at the tomb of the Abbé Paris admit of?

A. The patients were so affected by devotion, expectation, the place, the solemnity, and, above all, by the sympathy of the surrounding multi-

tude, that many of them were thrown into violent convulsions, which in certain instances, produced a removal of disorders depending upon obstruction : the same thing has lately been experienced in the operations of animal magnetism ; and the report of the French physicians upon it is very applicable to the present consideration *viz.* that the pretenders to the art, by working upon the imaginations of their patients, were frequently able to produce convulsions : that convulsions so produced, are amongst the most powerful, though most uncertain and unmanageable applications to the human frame which can be employed.

Q. What are the circumstances of the case which indicate this explication ?

A. 1. These miracles were *tentative*. Out of many thousands who resorted to the tomb, the history contains only nine cures.

2. The convulsions at the tomb are admitted.

3. The diseases principally depended upon inaction and obstruction.

4. The cures were gradual.

5. The cures were many of them incomplete.

6. Others were temporary.

Some of the cases alleged, do not require even this solution. The first in the catalogue is but the progress of a natural recovery. A young man laboured under an inflammation of one eye, and had lost the sight of the other. The inflamed eye was relieved, but the blindness of the other remained. The inflammation had before been abated by medicine ; and at the time of his atten-

dance at the tomb, he was using a lotion of laudanum : but what is still more material, the inflammation after some interval returned.

Q. In what material point did the Paris miracles differ from that of Tacitus and of Cardinal de Retz ?

A. They had not, like them, all the power and prejudice of the country on their side. These were opposed and examined by adversaries : many falsehoods were detected, and with something really extraordinary much fraud appeared to be mixed. But the efficacy of strong spasmodic affections was not then sufficiently known. Finally, the cause of Jansenism did not rise by the miracles, but sunk, although the miracles had the anterior persuasion of all the numerous adherents of that cause to set out with.

Q. What ultimate observations present themselves upon these miracles ?

A. They are the strongest examples which history supplies. In none of them was the miracle *unequivocal* ; by none were established prejudices and persuasions overthrown ; of none did the credit make its way, in opposition to authority and power ; by none were many induced to commit themselves, and that in contradiction to prior opinions, to a life of mortification, danger, and suffering ; none were called upon to attest them, at the expense of their fortunes and safety.

PART II.

ON THE AUXILIARY EVIDENCES OF
CHRISTIANITY.

CHAP. I.

PROPHECY.

Q. With what remarkable prophecy does Paley open this part of his work ?

A. With that which is recorded in the close of the lii. chap. of Isaiah, and in the whole of the liii.

Q. What does this purport to contain ?

A. The predictions of a writer who lived seven centuries before the Christian era.

Q. How do you shew incontestably that the words alleged were spoken or written before the fact to which they apply took place, or could be by any natural means foreseen ?

A. The record comes out of the custody of adversaries. The Jews are our librarians. The passage is in their copies, as well as in ours. With many attempts to explain it away, none has ever been made by them to discredit its authenticity.

Q. What adds to the force of the quotation ?

A. That it is taken from a writing *declaredly prophetic* ; professing to describe future transactions and changes connected with the fate of the Jewish nation. The words were delivered by Isaiah in a prophetic character, with due solemnity, and were all along understood by the Jewish reader to refer to something that was to take place after the time of the author. This is set forth in the book of Ecclesiasticus : * “ He saw by an excellent spirit, &c.”

It is also entire, separate, and uninterruptedly directed to one scene of things.

Q. How do you know that the application of this prophecy to the Evangelical History is plain and appropriate ?

A. Here is no double sense ; no figurative or unintelligible language. The obscurities or expressions that require a local knowledge, are few, and not of great importance. Nor do any varieties of reading, or a different construing of the original, produce any material alteration in the sense.

Q. But a natural question occurs, what turn did the Jews themselves give to this prophecy ?

A. There is good proof that the ancient Rabbins explained it of their expected Messiah ; but their modern expositors concur, in representing it as a description of the calamitous state and in-

* Chap. xlviii. ver. 24.

tended restoration of the Jewish people, who are here exhibited under the character of a single person. It has not been discovered that their exposition rests upon any critical arguments, or upon these in any other than a very minute degree. The application which the Jews contend for, appears to labour under insuperable difficulties ; it may be demanded of them to explain, in *whose* name or person, if the Jewish people be the sufferer, does the prophet speak, when he says, “ He hath borne *our* griefs, and carried *our* sorrows, yet *we* did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted ; but he was wounded for *our* transgressions, he was bruised for *our* iniquities, &c.” Again, in the seventh verse, “ he was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth, &c.” quadrates with no part of the Jewish history with which we are acquainted. The mention of the “ grave,” and the “ tomb,” in the ninth verse, is not very applicable to the fortunes of a nation ; and still less so is the conclusion of the prophecy in the twelfth verse.

Q. To what author does Paley refer us for an arrangement of several other prophecies in the Old Testament applicable to the New Testament ?

A. To bishop Chandler who has written a treatise upon the subject.

II. Q. What is a second head of argument from prophecy founded upon ?

A. Upon our Lord’s predictions concerning the

destruction of Jerusalem, recorded by three out of the four evangelists.*

These passages are direct and explicit predictions. References to the same event, some plain, some parabolical, or otherwise figurative, are found in other discourses of our Lord.†

Q. How is the general description of the agreement of this prophecy with the event, *i. e.* the capture of Jerusalem by Vespasian, made evident?

A. The accordancy in various articles of detail, has been shown by many learned writers, and we have a copious account of the transaction from Josephus, a Jewish and contemporary historian. This part of the case is perfectly free from doubt.

Q. What, in Paley's opinion, is the only doubt that can be raised upon the subject?

A. Whether the prophecy was really delivered *before* the event.

Q. What are the observations then, which he brings to bear on this point?

A. 1. The judgment of antiquity, though varying in the precise year of the publication of the three Gospels, *concurs* in assigning to them a date prior to the destruction of Jerusalem.

2. This judgment is confirmed by a strong probability, arising from the course of human

* See Luke xxi. 5—25. Matt. xxiv. and Mark xiii. also again Luke xix. 41—44.

† Matt. xxi. 33—46. xxii. 1—7. Mark xii. 1—12. Luke xiii. 4—9, xx. 9—20. xxi. 5—13.

life. The destruction took place in the seventieth year after the birth of Christ. The three evangelists, were, it is probable, not much younger than he was. They must, consequently, have been far advanced in life when Jerusalem was taken; and no reason has been given why they should defer writing their histories so long.

3. If the evangelists, at the time of writing the Gospels, had known of the destruction of Jerusalem, by which catastrophe the prophecies were plainly fulfilled, it is most probable, that, in recording the predictions, they would have dropped some word or other about the completion; as Luke, after relating the denunciation of a dearth by Agabus, adds, "which came to pass in the days of Claudius Cæsar."

4. The admonitions which Christ is represented to have given to his followers to save themselves by flight, are not easily accounted for, on the supposition of the prophecy being fabricated after the event. Either the Christians, did make their escape from Jerusalem, or they did not: if they did, they must have had the prophecy amongst them; if they did not know of any such prediction at the time of the siege, nor take notice of any such warning, it was an improbable fiction, in a writer publishing his work near to that time, and addressing it to Jews and to Jewish converts (which Matthew certainly did), to state that the followers of Christ had received admonitions, of which they made no use, and of which experience then recent proved, that those who were most

concerned to know and regard them, were ignorant or negligent.

5. It is probable, that if the prophecies had been composed after the event, there would have been more specification. The names or descriptions of the enemy, the general, the emperor, would have been found in them. The designation of the time would have been more determinate.

Q. How may we answer the objection, that this prophecy is mixed up, or connected with, expressions that relate to the final judgment of the world?

A. The objection does not concern our present argument. If our Saviour actually foretold the destruction of Jerusalem it is sufficient; even although we should allow, that the narration of the prophecy had combined what had been said by him on kindred subjects, without accurately preserving the order, or always noticing the transition of the discourse.

CHAP. II.

THE MORALITY OF THE GOSPEL.

Q. In stating the morality of the Gospel as an argument of its truth, what two points may be conceded ?

A. First, that the teaching of morality was not the primary design of the mission ; secondly, that morality, neither in the Gospel, nor in any other book, can be a subject, properly speaking, of discovery.

Q. How may the scope of Christianity, as a *revelation*, be briefly described ?

A. It might be said that it was to influence the conduct of human life, by establishing the *proof of a future state of reward and punishment*.—
“ to bring life and immortality to light.”

Q. What then is the direct object of the design ?

A. To supply motives not rules ; sanctions, not precepts. The members of civilized society can, in all ordinary cases, judge tolerably well how they ought to act : but without a future state, or without credited evidence of that state, they want a *motive* to their duty. The most important service therefore that can be rendered to human life, is to convey to the world authorized assurances of a future existence. And although in doing this, moral precepts or examples, may be occa-

sionally given, and be highly valuable, yet still they do not form the original purpose of the mission.

Q. Why cannot morality, either in the Gospel or any other book, be a subject of discovery properly so called ?

A. There cannot, in morality, be any thing similar to what are called discoveries in natural philosophy, in the arts of life, and in some sciences, as the system of the universe, the circulation of the blood, &c., and some other things of the same sort ; facts, or proofs, or contrivances, before totally unknown and unthought of ; since the qualities of actions depend entirely upon their effects ; which effects must all along have been the subject of human experience.

We refer actions to rules, and rules to public happiness. Now, in the formation of these rules, there is no place for discovery, properly so called, but there is ample room for the exercise of wisdom, judgment, and prudence.

Q. What kind of morality however does Paley consider that of the Gospel to be ?

A. Most extraordinary, when we consider from whom it came, and difficult to account for without allowing some degree of validity to the pretensions of the Religion : quite beyond the production either of cunning or enthusiasm.

Q. What is the most convenient division under which this subject may be treated ?

A. That of the *things taught*, and the *manner of teaching*.

Q. Under the first head to what author does Paley confess his obligations ?

A. The author of *the internal evidence of Christianity*, whom he designates as a most acute observer of human nature, and a sincere convert to Christianity.

Q. What two positions does he consider this author to have satisfactorily made out ?

A. I. That the Gospel omits some qualities, which have usually engaged the praises and admiration of mankind, but which, in reality, and in their general effects, have been prejudicial to human happiness.

II. That the Gospel has brought forward some virtues, which possess the highest intrinsic value, but which have commonly been overlooked and contemned.

Q. How does he exemplify these propositions ?

A. The first, in the instances of friendship, patriotism, active courage ; in the sense in which these qualities are usually understood, and in the conduct which they often produce.

The second, in the instances of passive courage, patience under affronts and injuries, humility, irresistance, placability.

Q. The truth is that there are two opposite descriptions of character, under which mankind may be classed ; what are they ?

A. The one possesses vigour and resolution ; is daring and quick in its sensibilities, jealous of its fame, eager in its attachments, inflexible in its purpose, and violent in its resentments.

The other, meek, yielding, forgiving; not prompt to act, but silent and gentle under rudeness and insult, suing for reconciliation where others would demand satisfaction, indulgent to the prejudices, &c.

Q. What may be observed of the former of these characters?

A. It is, and ever has been the favourite of the world. It is the character of great men. There is a dignity in it which universally commands respect.

Q. What of the latter?

A. It appears poor-spirited, tame, and abject. Yet with the founder of Christianity, this latter is the subject of his commendation, precepts and example: but the former is so, in no part of its composition. This, and nothing else, is the character designed in many remarkable passages as: "Resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also;" &c. This is not common-place morality. It is very original. It shews at least (and it is for this we produce it) that no two things can be more different than the Heroic and the Christian character.

Q. With regard to this species of character what, according to Paley, has the author above-mentioned proved?

A. He has proved, in contradiction to first impressions, popular opinion, orators, poets, historians and moralists, that the latter character possesses the most of true worth, is the most

difficult to be acquired or sustained, and contributes most to the happiness of social life.

Q. If this disposition were *universal*, what would be the case with the world ?

A. It would become a *society of friends*.

Q. But if the contrary disposition were universal, what would it be ?

A. A scene of universal contention.

Q. If, as is the fact, the meek disposition be only partial, if a few be actuated by it amongst a multitude who are not, what is found to be the case ?

A. In whatever degree it does prevail, in the same proportion it prevents, allays, and terminates quarrels, the great disturbers of human happiness, so far as man's happiness depends upon man.

Q. What further observation does Paley add respecting the former of the two characters above described ?

A. That although it may be occasionally useful ; although, perhaps, a great general, or statesman, may be formed by it, who may benefit mankind, yet is this true of many qualities acknowledged to be vicious. *Envy* is a quality of this sort ; though we know not a stronger stimulus to exertion.

Q. How did our Saviour display his love of the character which we are defending ?

A. In his repeated correction of the ambition of his disciples ; in his frequent admonitions, that greatness with them was to consist in humi-

lity; in his censure of that love of distinction and superiority, which the chief persons amongst his countrymen, were wont on all occasions to betray.*

Q. What does Paley conclude upon this preference of the *patient* to the heroic character?

A. That it is a peculiarity in the Christian institution, which forms an argument of wisdom much beyond the situation and natural character of the person who delivered it.

II. Q. What is the second argument drawn from the morality of the N. T.?

A. The stress laid by our Saviour upon the regulation of the thoughts?

Q. How is this consideration connected with the other?

A. That relates to the malicious passions; this, to the voluptuous. Together, they comprehend the whole character.

“Out of the *heart* proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications,” &c.—“These are the things which defile a man.” †

Q. There can be no doubt that the propensities of our nature must be subject to regulation; but the question is, *where* the check ought to be placed,—upon the thought, or only upon the action?

A. Our Saviour, in the texts quoted, has pronounced a decisive judgment. He makes the controul of thought essential. Internal purity

* Matt. xxiii. 6. See also Mark xii. 39. Luke xx. 46. xiv. 7.

† See also Matt. xxiii. 25. 27. and v. 28.

with him is every thing. Now we contend that this is the only discipline which can succeed ; in other words, that a moral system, which prohibits actions, but leaves the thoughts at liberty, will be ineffectual, and is therefore unwise.

III. Q. Had a teacher of morality in the most improved state of society, been asked for a general principle of conduct and a short rule of life, what would have been thought the most judicious answer he could have returned ?

A. To have instructed the person who consulted him, “ constantly to refer his actions to what he believed to be the will of his Creator, and constantly to have in view not his own interest and gratification alone, but the happiness and comfort of those about him.

Q. For what reason do you say this ?

A. Because, by the first direction, he would suggest the only motive which acts steadily and uniformly in all occurrences and under all temptations ; and in the second, he would correct, what, of all tendencies in the human character, stands most in need of correction, *selfishness*, or a contempt of other men’s conveniency. In estimating the value of a moral rule, we must regard not only the particular duty, but the general spirit ; not only what it directs us to do, but the character which it is likely to form in us. So this rule will never fail to make him who obeys it *considerate* of the rights, and the *feelings* of other men ; especially of all who are dependent upon him.

Q. What texts do you consider particularly applicable to the most philosophic character that could be attributed to our Saviour ?

A. Matt. xxii. 35—40. xix. 16. Luke x. 27.

Q. Does it detract from the precepts contained in these texts, that they are extant in the Mosaic code ?

A. No ; for his laying his finger, as it were, upon these precepts ; his stating them, as the sum of all the others ; in a word, his proposing them to his hearers for their rule and principle, was our Saviour's own.

Q. What texts do you quote to shew that what our Saviour said upon the subject, appears to have *fixed* the sentiment among his followers ?

A. Rom. xiii. 9. Gal. v. 14. 1 John iv. 1 Peter i. 22. Moreover it is well known, that this love, or charity, or regard to the welfare of others, runs in various forms through all the preceptive parts of the apostolic writings.

Q. How do we know that this temper, for some time at least, descended in purity to succeeding Christians ?

A. It is attested by one of the earliest and best of the remaining writings of the apostolical fathers, the epistle of the Roman Clement. The meekness of the Christian character reigns throughout the whole of that excellent piece, which was written to compose the dissensions of the church of Corinth.

This sacred principle too, of forbearance, lenity, and forgiveness, mixes with all the writings

of that age. There are more quotations, in the apostolical fathers, of texts which relate to these points, than of any other. Christ's sayings had *struck* them. "Not rendering," said Polycarp the disciple of John, "evil for evil, or railing, for railing, or striking for striking, or cursing for cursing." "Be ye mild at their anger," saith Ignatius his companion, "humble at their boastings, &c."

IV. Q. By what other quality is the morality of the Gospel distinguished?

A. The exclusion of regard to fame and reputation.* And this rule, by parity of reason, is extended to all other virtues.

Q. Is the pursuit of fame stated as a vice in any part of the N. T.?

A. It is only said that an action, to be virtuous, must be independent of it; it is not publicity, but ostentation, which is prohibited, not the mode, but the motive, of the action, which is regulated.

Q. In what does the difference of this exclusion of regard to human opinion lie?

A. Not so much in the duties to which the teachers of virtue would persuade mankind, as in the manner and topics of persuasion. When *we* set about to give advice, our lectures are full of the advantages of character, of the regard that is due to appearances and to opinion, &c. Widely different from this was our Saviour's instruction; and the difference was founded upon the best

* See Matt. vi. 1, 6.

reasons. For, however the care of reputation, or even of the opinion of good men, are topics to which we are fain to have recourse in our exhortations; true virtue is that which discards these considerations absolutely, and retires from them all to the single purpose of pleasing God. And in teaching this, he acted consistently with his office as a monitor from heaven.

Q. After what our Saviour *taught*, what are we next to consider?

A. The *manner* of his teaching; which was extremely peculiar, yet precisely adapted to the peculiarity of his character and situation.

Q. How do you shew this?

A. His lessons did not consist of disquisitions, or moral essays, or sermons, or set treatises. When he delivered a precept, it was seldom that he added any proof or argument; still more seldom, any limitations and distinctions. His instructions were conceived in short, emphatic, sententious rules, in occasional reflections, or in sound maxims.

Q. Though this might not be a suitable method for a philosopher or a moralist, yet how was it so to Christ in his situation as a teacher?

A. He came as a messenger from God. He put the truth of what he taught upon authority. In the choice, therefore, of his mode of teaching, the purpose to be consulted was *impression*: because conviction, which forms the principal end of our discourses, was to arise in the minds of his followers from a different source, from their

respect to his person and authority. Also our Lord's ministry was of short duration; he had many places to visit, and various audiences to address: he was generally besieged by crowds of followers, and sometimes driven away by persecution, commotions. Under these circumstances, nothing appears to have been so practicable, or likely to be so efficacious, as the leaving, wherever he came, concise lessons of duty. The question is not, whether a more complete discourse upon morals might not have been pronounced; but whether more could have been said in the same room, better adapted to the exigences of the hearers?

By this mode of moral instruction too, which proceeds not by disquisition but by precept, the rules will be conceived in absolute terms, leaving the application, and the distinctions that attend it, to the reason of the hearer. It is further also to be remarked, that many of those strong expressions, such as, "If any man will smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also:" &c. though they appear in the form of specific precepts, are intended as descriptive of disposition and character. A specific compliance with the precepts would be of little value, but the disposition which they inculcate is of the highest.

Q. To the objection, which may be urged, that this disposition is unattainable: what may be answered?

A. That so is all perfection: ought therefore a moralist to recommend imperfections? One ex-

cellency, however, of our Saviour's rules, is, that they are either never mistaken, or never so mistaken as to do harm.

Q. How will the foregoing observations assist us in estimating our Saviour's character?

A. By placing his conduct, as a moral teacher, in a proper point of view; especially when it is considered, that to deliver moral disquisitions was no part of his design,—to teach morality at all was only a subordinate part of it; his great business being to supply, what was much more wanting, stronger moral sanctions, and clearer assurances of a future judgment.

Q. What may be said of the parables of the N. T.?

A. They are, many of them, such as would have done honour to any book in the world: not perhaps in style and diction, but in the choice of subjects, in the structure of the narratives, in the aptness, and force of circumstances woven into them; and some in an union of pathos and simplicity.

Q. What may be observed of the *Lord's Prayer*?

A. For a succession of solemn thoughts, for fixing the attention upon a few great points, for suitableness to every condition, for sufficiency, for conciseness without obscurity, for the weight and real importance of its petitions, it is without a rival.

Q. What are we hence induced to ask?

A. Whence had this man his wisdom? Was

our Saviour a well-instructed philosopher, whilst he is represented as an illiterate peasant? Or shall we say that some early Christians of taste and education composed these pieces, and ascribed them to Christ?

Q. What may be answered to this?

A. That they *could not*. No specimens of the early Christians, still less of the Jews can authorize us to form such an opinion.

Q. But there is yet another view in which our Lord's discourses ought to be considered: what is this?

A. In their *negative* character;—not in what they did, but in what they did not, contain.

Q. Under this head what reflections appear to possess some weight?

A. I. They exhibit no particular description of the invisible world. The future happiness of the good, and the misery of the bad, which is all we want to be assured of, is positively affirmed, and represented by plain metaphors and comparisons. As to the rest, a solemn reserve is maintained; and this repels the suspicion of enthusiasm: for enthusiasm is wont to expatiate upon the condition of the departed, above all other subjects; and with a wild particularity.

II. Our Lord enjoined no austerities. He not only enjoined none as duties, but he recommended none as carrying men to a higher degree of divine favor.

III. He uttered no impassioned devotion. There was no heat in his piety or language; no

vehement ejaculations, no violent urgency, in his prayers. The Lord's Prayer is a model of calm devotion, and his words in the Garden are unaffected expressions, of a deep indeed, but sober piety.

IV. It is very usual with the human mind, to substitute fervency in a particular cause, for the merit of general morality ; and it is natural, in the leader of a sect, to encourage such a disposition in his followers. Christ did not overlook this turn of thought ; yet, he notices it only to condemn it.*

V. Nor, fifthly, did he fall in with any of the depraved fashions of his country, or with the natural bias of his own education.

VI. Far from the quibbling comments and expositions of the Jewish doctors at that time, with their distinctions and evasions ; there is not to be found one example of sophistry, or of false subtilty, in our Saviour's precepts.

VII. The national temper of the Jews was intolerant, narrow-minded, and excluding. In Jesus, whether we regard his lessons or his example, we see benevolence the most enlarged and comprehensive.

VIII. And lastly, Amongst the negative qualities of our religion, as it came out of the hands of its Founder and his apostles, we may reckon its abstraction from all views of ecclesiastical or civil policy. With respect to *politics*, in the usual

* See Matt, vii, 21, 22.

sense of that word, Christianity declines every question upon the subject. Whilst politicians are disputing about monarchies, aristocracies, and republics, the Gospel is alike applicable, useful, and friendly to them all; inasmuch as, 1st, it tends to make men virtuous, and it is easier to govern good men than bad men under any constitution; 2dly, it states obedience to government in ordinary cases, to be not merely a submission to force, but a duty of conscience; 3dly, it induces dispositions favourable to public tranquillity, a Christian's chief care being to pass quietly through this world to a better; 4thly, it prays for communities, and for their governors, of whatever description or denomination they be, with a fervency proportioned to the influence they possess upon human happiness.

Q. When therefore we consider the moral teaching of Christ in the foregoing points of view; and when we compare Christianity, as it came from its Author, either with other religions, or with itself in other hands, what must the most reluctant understanding be induced to acknowledge?

A. The probity, and also the good sense, of those to whom it owes its origin. Some regard will be thought due to the testimony of such men, when they declare their knowledge that the religion proceeded from God; and appeals to miracles which they wrought, or which they saw.

Q. What more may the qualities observable in the religion be thought to prove?

A. They would have been extraordinary, had it come from any person : when referred to the person from whom it did come, they are exceedingly so. What was Jesus, externally ? A Jewish peasant, in a remote province of Palestine, until the time of his public character. He had no master to instruct him ; he had read no books but those of Moses and the Prophets ; he had received no lessons from a Socrates or a Plato. Supposing it true, which it is not, that his morality might be picked out of Greek and Roman writings, they were writings which *he* had never seen.

And who were his coadjutors,—the persons into whose hands the religion came after his death ? A few fishermen, as uneducated, and, for the purpose of framing rules of morality, as unpromising as himself. Suppose the mission real, all this is accounted for ; the unsuitableness of the authors no longer surprises us ; but without *reality*, it is very difficult to explain, how such a system should proceed from such persons. Christ was not like any other carpenter ; the apostles were not like any other fishermen.

Q. But the subject is not yet exhausted : what else may be considered as part of the morality of the Gospel ?

A. The *character of Christ* : one strong observation upon which is, that, neither as represented by his followers, nor as attacked by his enemies, is he charged with any personal vice ; whilst some stain pollutes the morals or the mo-

ality of almost every other teacher, and of every other lawgiver.

Secondly, In the histories which are left us of Jesus Christ, although very short, and dealing in narrative, not in observations or panegyric, we perceive, beside the absence of every appearance of vice, traces of devotion, humility, benignity, mildness, patience, prudence : the qualities themselves are to be collected from incidents ; inasmuch as the terms are never used of Christ in the Gospels, nor is any formal character of him drawn in any part of the N. T.

Thus we see the *devoutness* of his mind, in his frequent retirement to solitary prayer ; in his habitual giving of thanks, &c.; his *humility*, in his constant reproof of contentions for superiority : the *benignity* of his temper, in his kindness to children ; in the tears which he shed over his falling country ; and upon the death of his friend, &c. ; the *mildness* of his character is discovered, in his rebuke of the forward zeal of his disciples at the Samaritan village ; in his prayer for his enemies at the moment of his suffering, &c.. His *prudence* is discerned in his conduct on trying occasions, and in answers to artful questions.

Q. Upon what else do our Saviour's lessons touch ?

A. Oftentimes, by very affecting representations, upon some of the most interesting topics of human duty, and of human meditation : upon the

principles, by which the decisions of the last day will be regulated ; upon the supreme importance of religion : upon penitence, self-denial, watchfulness, placability, confidence in God, the value of spiritual worship, the necessity of moral obedience, and the directing of that obedience to the spirit and principle of the law, instead of seeking for evasions in a technical construction of its terms.*

The New Testament also offers the best and shortest rules of life, or, which is the same thing, the best descriptions of virtue, that has ever been delivered.

The relative duties of husbands and wives, of parents and children, of masters and servants, of Christian teachers and their flocks, of governors and their subjects, are set forth by the same writer, not indeed with the copiousness and detail of a moralist, but with leading rules and principles ; and, above all, with truth, and with authority.

Q. Lastly, what may we observe of the whole volume of the N. T. ?

A. That it is replete with *piety* ; with, what were almost unknown to Heathen moralists, *devotional virtues*, the most profound veneration of the Deity, an habitual sense of his bounty and protection, a firm confidence in the final results of his counsels and dispensations, a disposition to resort, upon all occasions, to his mercy for the supply of human wants, for assistance in danger, for relief from pain, for the pardon of sin.

* See James i. 27. 1 Tim. i. 5. Titus ii. 11, 12.

CHAP. III.

THE CANDOUR OF THE WRITERS OF THE
NEW TESTAMENT.

Q. In what does this candour consist ?

A. In noticing many circumstances, which no writer would have forged, or inserted in his book, who had thought himself at liberty to carve and mould the particulars of the story, according to his choice, or his judgment of the effect.

Q. What example can you cite of this ?

A. The account of Christ's resurrection, stating, that after he was risen he appeared to his disciples alone ; stating this in substance, though the exclusive word *alone* may not be used : now the history of the resurrection would have come with much more advantage, if it had been related that Jesus appeared, after he was risen, to his foes as well as his friends, to the Scribes and Pharisees, the Jewish council, and the Roman governor ; or even if they had asserted the public appearance of Christ in general unqualified terms.

Q. What are the instances in which the Evangelists honestly relate what they must have known would make against them ?

A. John the Baptist's message, preserved by Saint Matthew (xi. 2.), and Saint Luke (vii. 18.): also the apostasy of Judas. Also John vi. 66.

“From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.” Was it the part of a writer who dealt in suppression and disguise to put down *this* anecdote?

Or this, which Matthew has preserved (xii. 58.)? “He did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.”

See also Matthew (v. 17, 18.) which text Marcion thought so objectionable, that he altered the words, so as to invert the sense.

See also (Acts xxv. 19.)

Q. Where do we observe a particular mark of candour, and a disposition strongly averse to extol and magnify?

A. In the conclusion of the Acts, where the evangelist, after relating that Paul, on his first arrival at Rome, preached to the Jews from morning until evening, adds, “And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not.”

Q. Can you quote some other passages which were very unlikely to be the production of artifice or forgery?

A. *Matt. xxi. 21.* It appears very improbable that these words should have been put into Christ’s mouth, if he had not actually spoken them, for in their obvious construction, they carry with them a difficulty, which no writer would have brought upon himself officiously.

Luke ix. 59. The answer of Christ in this case, though very expressive of the transcendent importance of religious concerns, was apparently

harsh and repulsive, and such as would not have been made for him, if he had not really used it.

Matt. v. 22. This passage is emphatic, cogent, and well calculated for the purpose of impression; but is inconsistent with the supposition of art or wariness on the part of the relater.

The short reply of our Lord to Mary Magdalen, after his resurrection (John xx. 16, 17.), "Touch me not," &c. must have been founded in a reference to some prior conversation, for the want of knowing which, his meaning is hidden from us. This very obscurity, however, is a proof of genuineness. No one would have forged such an answer.

John vi. Without calling in question the expositions given of this passage, it labours under an obscurity, in which no one, who made speeches for the persons of his narrative, would have voluntarily involved them.

The account of the institution of the eucharist bears strong internal marks of genuineness. If it had been feigned, it would have been more full; it would have come nearer to the actual mode of celebrating the rite, as that mode obtained very early in Christian churches. As is the case in the forged piece called the Apostolic Constitutions.

Q. To what does the argument built upon these examples extend?

A. To the authenticity of the books as well as to their truth: it is improbable that the forger of a history in the name of another should have

inserted such passages ; as it is also, that the persons whose names the books bear should have fabricated such passages, or allowed them a place, if they had not believed them true.

Q. What observations does Paley quote from the works of Dr. Lardner and Dr. Beattie?

A. “ Christians are induced to believe the writers of the Gospel, by observing the evidences of piety and probity that appear in their writings, in which there is no deceit, or artifice, or cunning, or design. “ No remarks are thrown in, to anticipate objections ; nothing of that caution, which never fails to distinguish the testimony of those who are conscious of imposture ; no endeavour to reconcile the reader’s mind to what may be extraordinary in the narrative.

Q. What instances may be adduced of the *naturalness* of some things related in the N. T. ?

A. Mark ix. 23. The struggle in the father’s heart, between solicitude for the preservation of his child, and an involuntary distrust of Christ’s power to heal him, is expressed with an air of reality, which could hardly be counterfeited.

Again, (Matt. xxi. 9.) the eagerness of the people to introduce Christ into Jerusalem, and their demand, a short time afterwards, of his crucifixion, represents popular favour in exact agreement with nature and with experience.

The rulers and Pharisees rejecting Christ, whilst many of the common people received him, was an effect, in the then state of Jewish prejudices, to have been expected.

We may remark also our Lord's conversation at the well (John iv. 29.)

The lawyer's subtilty in running a distinction upon the word *neighbour* (Luke x. 29.)

The behaviour of Gallio (Acts xviii. 12—17.), and of Festus (xxv. 18, 19.).

Q. What else may be observed in the Gospels?

A. Some *properties*, as they may be called: that is, circumstances separately suiting with the situation, character, and intention of their respective authors:

CHAP. IV.

IDENTITY OF CHRIST'S CHARACTER.

Q. To what is the argument expressed by this title principally applied?

A. To a comparison of the first three Gospels with that of St. John.

Q. The passages of Christ's history preserved by St. John, are, except his passion and resurrection, for the most part different from those delivered by the other evangelists: what is the ancient, and probably true account of this difference?

A. That St. John wrote *after* the rest, and to supply what he thought omissions in their narra-

tives. But in the comparison of these several accounts, although actions and discourses are ascribed to Christ by St. John, in general different from the other evangelists, yet, under this diversity, there is a similitude of *manner*, which indicates that the actions and discourses proceeded from the same person.

Q. I. In what article does Paley assert that he finds this argument most strong ?

A. In our Saviour's mode of teaching, and in that particular property of it, which consists in his drawing of his doctrine from the occasion, raising reflections from the objects and incidents before him, or turning a particular discourse then passing, into an opportunity of general instruction.

Q. What passages of the three first Evangelists, and what of St. John, does he compare together, for the purpose of demonstrating this point ?

A. Matt. xii. 47—50. Matt. xvi. 5. Matt. xv. 1, 2, 10, 11, 15—20. Mark x. 13, 14, 15. Mark i. 16, 17. Luke xi. 27. Luke xiii. 1—3. Luke xiv. 15. And John vi. 25. John iv. 12. John iv. 31. John ix. 1—5. John ix. 35—40.

Q. What does Paley observe on this comparison ?

A. That nothing of this *manner* is perceptible in the speeches recorded in the Acts, or in any other but those which are attributed to Christ, and that, it was a very unlikely manner for a forger to attempt ; and very difficult to execute, if

he had to supply both the incidents and the observations upon them, out of his own head. A forger or a fabulist would have made for Christ, discourses exhorting to virtue and dissuading from vice in general terms, without so many allusions to time, place, and other little circumstances.

II. Q. In what does an affinity appear to exist?

A. Between the history of Christ's placing a little child in the midst of his disciples, as related by the first three evangelists, and the history of Christ's washing his disciples' feet, as given by Saint John. In the stories themselves there is no resemblance. But the affinity consists in these two articles: First, that both stories denote the emulation prevailing amongst Christ's disciples, and his own care to correct it; the moral of both is the same. Secondly, that both stories are specimens of the same very peculiar manner of teaching, *viz.* by action.

III. Q. What is the next specimen of similarity produced?

A. A singularity in Christ's language, which runs through all the evangelists, and is found also in those discourses of Saint John that have nothing similar to the other Gospels, *viz.* the appellation of "the Son of man;" applied by Christ to himself, but never used of him, or towards him by any other person.

IV. Q. What is the next point of agreement?

A. The conduct of Christ represented by his

different historians, as withdrawing himself out of the way, whenever the behaviour of the multitude indicated a disposition to tumult.

Ma xiv. 22. Luke v. 15, 16. With these quotations, compare John v. 13. vi. 15.

V. Q. What other singular circumstance in Christ's ministry is recorded by all the Evangelists ?

A. The reserve which, for some time, he used in speaking of his own character.*

VI. Q. What other similarity may be noticed ?

A. The difficulty which our Lord's disciples found in understanding him, when he spoke of what related to his passion or resurrection ; and the natural wish in them to ask for explanation. These circumstances are distinctly noticed by Mark and Luke.—Luke ix. 45. Mark ix. 32. In John's Gospel, xvi. 16. we have, on a different occasion, the same difficulty of apprehension, curiosity, and restraint.

VII. Q. What particular trait of Christ's character, conspicuous in the three first Gospels, is preserved, under separate examples, in that of St. John ?

A. His meekness during his last sufferings. The answer given by him, in St. John xviii. 20, 21. when the high priest asked him of his disciples and his doctrine, is very meek of a piece with his reply to the armed party which seized

* Compare Matt. xvi. 20. Mark iii. 11. Luke iv. 41. with John x. 21, 25.

him, as we read it in St. Mark's Gospel, xiv. 48. and in St. Luke's xxii. 52. In both answers, we discern the same tranquillity, the same reference to his public teaching. His mild expostulation with Pilate, on two several occasions, as related by St. John, is delivered with the same unruffled temper, which conducted him through the last scene of his life, as described by the other Evangelists.*

Q. What other correspondencies on this head are instanced by Paley?

A. (1) The first three evangelists record our Saviour's agony, *i. e.* his devotion in the Garden; in which they all make him pray, "that the cup might pass from him." This is the particular metaphor. Now Saint John does not give the scene in the Garden: but when Jesus was seized, and some resistance was attempted by Peter, Jesus checked him with this reply: "Put up thy sword into the sheath; the cup which my father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" This is more than consistency; it is coincidence.

(2) Matthew and Mark make the charge, upon which our lord was condemned, to be a threat of destroying the temple; but they neither of them inform us, upon what circumstance this calumny was founded. St. John supplies us with this information; for he relates, that when the Jews asked our Lord, "What sign showest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?" he an-

* Compare also John xviii. 23. with Luke xxiii. 28.

swered, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

Q. What strong and more general instance of agreement is noticed ?

A. 'The first three evangelists relate the appointment of the twelve apostles ; and give a catalogue, of their names. John, without ever mentioning the appointment, or the catalogue, supposes, throughout his whole narrative, Christ to be accompanied by a select party of disciples ; the number to be twelve ; and whenever he notices any of one of that number, it is one included in the catalogue of the others : and the names principally occurring in the course of *his* history, are the names extant in their list.

All this bespeaks reality.

CHAP. V.

ORIGINALITY OF OUR SAVIOUR'S CHARACTER.

Q. The Jews, whether right or wrong, understood their prophecies to foretel the advent of a person, who should advance their nation to a supreme degree of splendour and prosperity. Now, had Jesus been an enthusiast, what is probable ?

A. That his enthusiasm would have fallen in with the popular delusion, and that, he would have assumed the character to which these predictions were supposed to relate.

Q. But, more than conjecture, what is the fact?

A. That all the pretended Messiahs did so : and we learn from Josephus, that there were many of these. Some of them probably impostors ; others enthusiasts : but, whether impostors or enthusiasts, they concurred in producing themselves in the character which their countrymen looked for.

That Jesus should so greatly deviate from the general persuasion, appears to be inconsistent with the imputation of enthusiasm or imposture.

Q. If it be said that Jesus, having tried the other plan, turned to this ; what may we answer ?

A. That the thing is said without evidence, and against evidence ; that it was competent to the rest to have done the same, yet that nothing of this sort was thought of by any.

CHAP. VI.

Conformity of the facts occasionally mentioned or referred to in Scripture, with the state of things in those times, as represented by foreign and independent accounts.

Q. What does such a conformity prove ?

A. That the writers of the N. T. possessed a species of local knowledge which could only belong to inhabitants of that country, and to those living in that age.

Q. What does this argument, if well made out by examples, go near to prove ?

A. The absolute genuineness of the writings. It carries them up to the age of the reputed authors, in which it must have been difficult to impose upon the public forgeries in the names of those authors, and in which there is no evidence that any were attempted. It proves, at least, that the books were composed by persons living in the time and country in which these things were transacted ; and consequently capable of being well informed of facts.

Q. And why is the argument stronger when applied to the **N. T.** than any other writings ?

A. From the mixed nature of the allusions which this book contains. The scene of action is not confined to a single country, but displayed in the greatest cities of the Roman empire. Allusions are made to the manners and principles of the Greeks, the Romans, and the Jews. This variety renders a forgery proportionably more difficult, especially to writers of a later age. A Greek or Roman Christian would have been wanting in Jewish literature ; a Jewish convert in that of Greece and Rome.

Q. What however does this argument entirely depend upon ?

A. An induction of particulars ; and therefore a detail of examples, distinctly and articulately proposed, is necessary.

Q. In collecting these examples what does Paley profess to have done ?

A. To have epitomized the first volume of the first part of Dr. Lardner's *Credibility of the Gospel History*; and he has brought the argument within compass, by contraction and the omission of what is not absolutely necessary.

Q. What writer is particularly made use of?

A. Josephus. He was born at Jerusalem four years after Christ's ascension. He wrote his history of the Jewish war some time after its destruction, which happened A. D. LXX, that is 37 years after the ascension; and his history of the Jews in the year XCIII, that is, sixty years after the ascension.

Q. What are the examples which Paley introduces on this head?

[Not to extend the limits of this Epitome too far it is thought requisite to confine these examples to the marginal references or indications where the passages are to be found.]

A. Matt. ii. 22, is compared with Joseph. Antiq. lib. xvii. c. 8. § 1. de Bell. lib. 1. c. 33. § 7. Ant. lib. xvii. c. 13. § 1.

Luke iii. 1, with Jos. Ant. lib. xvii. c. 8. § 1. ibxviii. c. 5. § 6. and c. 8. § 2.

Mark vi. 17, with Jos. Ant. l. xviii. c. 6. § 1. and Mark vi. 22, with Ant. l. xviii. c. 6. § 4.

Acts. xii. 1, with Ant. l. xviii. c. 7. § 10. and l. xix. c. 5. § 1.

Acts xii. 19—23, with Jos. Ant. l. xix. c. 8. § 2.

Acts xxiv. 24, with Ant. l. xx. c. 6. § 1 and 2.

Acts. xiii. 6, with Dio Cassius lib. liv. ad A. U. 732.

Acts xviii. 12, with Sueton. in Claud. c. xxv.
Dio lib. lxi.

Acts. ix. 31, with Jos. de Bell. l. xi. c. 13. § 1,
3, 4.

Acts xxi. 30, with Jos. de Bell. l. v. c. 5. § 8.

Acts iv. 1, with Jos. de Bell. l. ii. c. 17. § 2.

Acts xxv. 12, with Cicero. Orat. in Verrem.

Acts xvi. 13, with Philo in Flacc. p. 382, and
Jos. Ant. l. xiv. c. 10. § 24.

Acts xxvi. 5, with Jos. de Bell. l. 1. c. 5. § 2.

Mark vii. 3. 4, with Jos. Ant. l. xiii. c. 10. § 6.

Acts xxiii. 8, with Jos. de Bell. l. 11. c. 8. §
14, and Ant. l. xviii. c. 1. § 4.

Acts v. 17, with Jos. Ant. l. xiii. c. 10. § 6, 7.
and l. xx. c. 8. § 1.

Luke ix. 51, with Jos. Ant. l. xx. c. 5. § 1.

John iv. 20, with Ant. l. xviii. c. 5. § 1.

Matt. xxvi. 3, with Ant. l. xviii. c. 2. § 2. and
lib. xvii. c. 5. § 3.

Acts xxiii. 4, with Ant. l. xx. c. 5. § 2. c. 6. § 2.
c. 9. § 2.

Matt. xxvi. 59, with Ant. l. xviii. c. 15. § 3, 4.

Luke iii. 1, with Jos. de Bell. l. ix. c. 12. § 6,
and l. xviii. 13.

Acts iv. 6, with de Bell. l. ii. c. 20. § 3.

John xix. 19. 20, with Sueton. Domit. c. x. and
Dio Cass. l. 54.

Matth. xxvii. 26, with Josephus & Livy lib.
xi. c. 5.

John xix. 16, with Plutarch, de iis qui sero
puniuntur p. 554. Paris, 1624.

John xix 32, with Aur. Vict. Ces. cap. xli.

Acts iii. 1, with Jos. Antiq. l. xv. c. 7. § 8.

Acts xv. 21, with Joseph. contra Ap. l. 11.

Acts xxi. 23, with Jos. de Bell. l. xi. c. 15.

2 Cor. xi. 24, with Jos. Ant. l. iv. c. 8. § 21.

Luke iii. 12, with Jos. de Bell. l. 11. c. 14. § 45.

Acts xxii. 25, with Cicero. Orat. in Verrem.

Acts xxii. 27. 28, with Jos. Ant. l. xiv. c. 10. § 13, and Dio Cass. lib. lx.

Acts xviii. 16 and 20, with Senec. Ep. v. Ulpian. l. 1. sect. De Custod. et Exhib. Reor. and Jos. Ant. l. xviii. c. 7. § 5.

Acts xxvii. 1, with Joseph. in Vit. § 3.

Acts xi. 27, with Jos. Ant. l. xx. c. 4. § 2.

Acts xviii. 1, 2, with Sueton. Claud. c. xxv.

Acts v. 37, with Jos. de Bell. l. vii.

Acts. xxi. 38, with de Bell. l. 11. c. 13. § 5.

Acts xvii. 22, with Diogenes Laert. in Epimenide l. 1. § 110. Pausanias l. 1. p. 4. l. v. p. 412.

Q. What do the examples thus collected shew ?

A. That the writers of the Christian History knew what they were writing about.

Q. By what considerations is the argument strengthened ?

A. I. That these agreements appear; not only in articles of public history, but sometimes, in minute, recondite, and very peculiar circumstances.

II. That the destruction of Jerusalem, produced such a change in the state of the country, that a writer who was unacquainted with the circumstances of the nation *before* that event, would

find it difficult to avoid mistakes, in endeavouring to give detailed accounts of transactions connected with those circumstances.

III. That there appears, in the writers of the N. T. a knowledge of the affairs of those times, which we do not find in authors of later ages.

Q. Amidst so many conformities we must expect to find some difficulties: which of these (with their solution) does Paley instance?

A. I. The taxing during which Jesus was born, was "first made," as we read, according to our translation, in St. Luke, "whilst Cyrenius was governor of Syria." Now Cyrenius was not governor of Syria until twelve, or, at the soonest, ten years after the birth of Christ; and a taxing, or census, was made in Judea in the beginning of his government.

The answer to this difficulty is found in his using the word "first:"—"And this taxing was *first* made."

The sentence may be construed thus: "This was the first assessment (or enrolment) of Cyrenius, governor of Syria;"* the words "governor of Syria" being used after the name of Cyrenius as his addition or title. And this title

* If the word which we render "first," be rendered "before," which it has been strongly contended that the Greek idiom allows of, the whole difficulty vanishes: for then the passage would be,—“Now this taxing was made before Cyrenius was Governor of Syria;” which corresponds with the chronology. But I rather choose to argue, that however the word "first" be rendered, to give it a meaning at all, it militates with the objection. In this I think there can be no mistake.

belonging to him at the time of writing the account, was naturally enough subjoined to his name, though acquired after the transaction which the account describes.

It appears from the form of the expression, that he had two taxings or enrolments in contemplation. And if Cyrenius had been sent upon this business into Judea, before he became governor of Syria, then the census acknowledged to have been made by him in the beginning of his government, would form a second, so as to occasion the other to be called the *first*.

II. Again, St. Luke in his third chapter says, “Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar,—Jesus *began to be about thirty* years of age :” supposing Jesus to have been born, as Matthew, and Luke himself relates, in the time of Herod, he must, according to Josephus and the Roman historians, have been at least 31 years of age in the fifteenth year of Tiberius. If he was born, as Matthew intimates, one or two years before Herod’s death, he would have been 32 or 33 years old at that time.

The solution turns upon an alteration in the construction of the Greek. The words in the original are allowed, by learned men, to signify, not “that Jesus began to be about thirty years of age,” but “that he was about thirty years of age when he began his ministry.” This construction being admitted, the adverb “about” gives us all the latitude we want.

III. In Acts v. 36. is another objection ; “For

before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody ;” &c.

Now Josephus has preserved the account of an impostor of the name of Theudas, at least seven years after Gamaliel’s speech, of which this text is a part, was delivered. It has been replied to the objection, that there might be two impostors of this name. It is proved from Josephus, that there were not fewer than four persons of the name of Simon within forty years, and not fewer than three of the name of Judas within ten years, who were all leaders of insurrections.

IV. Matt. xxiii. 34. “ From the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of *Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.*”

There is a Zacharias, whose death is related in the second book of Chronicles, in a manner which supports our Saviour’s allusion. But he was the son of *Jehoiada*.

There is also Zacharias the prophet ; who was the son of Barachiah, but of whose death we have no account.

There can be but little doubt, that the first Zacharias was the person spoken of by our Saviour ; and that the name of the father has been since added, or changed, by some one, who took it from the title of the prophecy, which happened to be better known to him than the history in the Chronicles.

CHAP. VII.

UNDESIGNED COINCIDENCES.

Q. Between the letters which bear the name of St. Paul and his history in the Acts, there exist many notes of correspondency: what does the simple perusal of the writings sufficiently prove?

A. That neither the history was taken from the letters, nor the letters from the history. And the coincidences, which are too close and numerous to be accounted for by accidental occurrences of fiction, must necessarily have truth for their foundation.

Q. How does this argument, which assumes nothing but the existence of the books, bear upon the general question of the Christian history?

A. First, St. Paul in these letters asserts, unequivocally, his own performance of miracles, and, also “*That miracles were the signs of an apostle.*” If this testimony come from St. Paul’s own hand, it is invaluable: and that it does so, the argument before us is calculated to give us a firm assurance.

Secondly, it shows that the series of action represented in the epistles of St. Paul, was real; which alone lays a foundation for the proposition that forms the subject of the first part of this work, *viz.* that the original witnesses of the

Christian history devoted themselves to toil and danger, in consequence of their belief of its truth, and for the sake of communicating the knowledge of it to others.

Thirdly, it proves that Luke, or whoever was the author of the Acts, was well acquainted with St. Paul's history ; and was probably, what he professes himself to be, a companion of St. Paul's travels ; which, if true, establishes, in a considerable degree, the credit even of his Gospel, because it shows, that the writer possessed opportunities of informing himself truly concerning the transactions which he relates.

Q. What does Paley notice as a sequel to this argument ?

A. The remarkable similitude between the style of St. John's Gospel, and of his First Epistle. Writings so circumstanced, prove themselves, and one another, to be genuine. This correspondency is the more valuable, as the epistle itself asserts, in St. John's manner indeed, but in terms sufficiently explicit, the writer's personal knowledge of Christ's history.

CHAP. VIII.

OF THE HISTORY OF THE RESURRECTION.

Q. As it is not *as a miracle*, that the Resurrection is a more decisive proof of supernatural agency than other miracles, and as it is not better attested than some others ; for what reason does more weight belong to it than to other miracles ?

A. It is completely certain that the apostles and first teachers of Christianity, asserted the fact. And this would have been certain, if the four Gospels had been lost, or never written. Every piece of Scripture recognizes the resurrection. Every epistle of every apostle, every author contemporary with the apostles, every writing for Christianity or against it, concur in representing the resurrection of Christ as received without disagreement by all who called themselves Christians. In other parts of the Gospel, a question may be made, whether the things related of Christ be the very things which the apostles and first teachers delivered concerning him ? And this depends a good deal upon the evidence of the genuineness, or rather, perhaps, of the antiquity, credit, and reception of the books. Of the resurrection no such doubt can be entertained. The only consideration is whether the apostles knowingly published a falsehood, or were them-

selves deceived. The first supposition is pretty generally given up. The nature of the undertaking, and of the men, exempt them from the suspicion of imposture. A solution more deserving of notice, would resolve their conduct into *enthusiasm*, and class the evidence of Christ's resurrection with stories extant of the apparitions of dead men.

Q. But what circumstances in the narrative destroy this supposition ?

A. It was not one person, but many, who saw him together, not only by night but by day, not once but several times : they not only saw him, but touched him, conversed with him, ate with him, examined his person, to satisfy their doubts.

Q. But it may be said that these accounts stand upon the credit of *our* records. How may this objection be answered ?

A. The resurrection of Christ was asserted by his disciples from the beginning : it was therefore incumbent upon those who denied it to have produced the dead body. The old account of his disciples having stolen it is untenable both from its impracticability and folly.

What account can be given of the *body*, upon the supposition of enthusiasm ? It is impossible our Lord's followers could believe that he was risen from the dead, if his corpse was lying before them. No enthusiasm ever reached such a pitch as that : a spirit may be an illusion ; a body is a real thing, an object of sense, in which there can

be no mistake. All accounts of spectres leave the body in the grave.

But, if we admit, upon the concurrent testimony of all the histories, that the religion of Jesus was set up at Jerusalem, and set up with asserting, a few days after he had been buried, his resurrection out of the grave, it is evident that, if his body could have been found, the Jews would have produced it, as the shortest and completest answer possible to the whole story.

CHAP. IX.

SECTION I.

THE PROPAGATION OF CHRISTIANITY.

Q. In this argument what is the first consideration?

A. In what degree, within what time, and to what extent, Christianity actually was propagated.

Q. What are the accounts of the matter which can be collected from our Books?

A. A *few days* after Christ's disappearance out of the world, we find about 120 disciples at Jerusalem, met together, not merely as believers in Christ, but as personally connected with the apostles, and with one another. We have no

reason to be surprized at so small a company ; for there is no proof, that the followers of Christ were yet formed into a society, and reduced into any order ; or that it was at this time even understood that a new religion was to be set up in the world.

Very soon after, on the day of Pentecost, there were added to the society about 3000 ; and many who were before believers in Christ, became now professors of Christianity, when they found that a religion was to be established, and a society formed by his laws.

We read in Acts iv. that soon after this the number was about 5000 ; an increase of 2000 within a very short time. And it is probable that there were many, both now and afterwards, who, although they believed in Christ, did not join themselves to this society ; or waited to see what was likely to become of it.

In the next chapter we read, that “ believers were the more added to the Lord, *multitudes* both of men and women.” And in the succeeding chapter, we are told, expressly, that “ the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly, and that a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.”

This may be called the first period in the propagation of Christianity ; commencing with the ascension of Christ, and extending to something more than one year after that event ; and whilst the preaching was confined to the single city of Jerusalem.

Q. What is the account of the second period?

A. By reason of a persecution, the converts were driven from that city, and dispersed throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria. Wherever they came, they brought their religion with them: for our historian informs us, that “they that were scattered abroad, went every-where preaching the word.” This was the work of the second period, which comprises about four years.

Hitherto the preaching of the Gospel had been confined to Jews, Jewish proselytes, and Samaritans.

It was not yet known to the apostles, that they were at liberty to propose the religion to mankind at large. The “mystery,” as Saint Paul calls it, was revealed to Peter by a miracle.

Q. What is the account of the third period?

A. About seven years after Christ’s ascension, the Gospel was preached to the Gentiles of Cesarea. A year after this, a great multitude of Gentiles were converted at Antioch in Syria. Upon Herod’s death, next year, it is observed, that “the word of God grew and multiplied.” Three years afterwards, Paul preached with great success at Iconium, and is represented as “making many disciples” at Derbe. Three years after this, Paul travelled through Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia, and found the churches “established in the faith, and increasing in number daily.” From Asia he proceeded into Greece, where we find him at Thessalonica and Berea, where “*many* of the Jews believed.” The next year and a half

of his ministry was spent at Corinth. Of his success in that city, we receive many intimations. Within less than a year after his departure from Corinth, and twenty-five years after the ascension, St. Paul fixed his station at Ephesus, for two years and something more, where he observes how “mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.” Beside these accounts, mention occurs, incidentally, of converts at Rome, Alexandria, Athens, Cyprus, Cyrene, Macedonia, Philippi.

This is the third period in the propagation, ending at the twenty-eight year after the ascension. The institution therefore, which properly *began* only after its author’s removal from the world, before the end of thirty years had spread through Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, almost all the districts of the Lesser Asia, Greece, and the islands of the Ægean, the sea-coast of Africa, and had extended itself to Rome, and Italy. During all this time, Jerusalem continued not only the centre of the mission, but a principal seat of the religion.

Q. Upon this abstract what observations appear material?

A. I. That the account comes from a person, who was concerned in a portion of what he relates, and was contemporary with the whole of it. Had ancient attestations been less satisfactory, the unaffected simplicity with which the author notices his presence upon certain occasions, and the entire absence of art and design from these notices, would have been sufficient to persuade us

that whoever he was, he lived in the times, and occupied the situation, in which he represents himself to be.

II. That this account is a very *incomplete* account of the preaching and propagation of Christianity ; that is, if what we read in history be true, much more than what the history contains must be true also.

III. That the account, so far as it goes, is for this very reason more credible. Had it been the author's design to have *displayed* the early progress of Christianity, he would have collected accounts of the preaching of the rest of the apostles.

IV. That the intimations of the number of converts, and of the success of the preaching of the apostles, come out for the most part *incidentally*, or are drawn from the historian by the occasion. All this tends to remove the suspicion of a design to exaggerate or deceive.

Q. What are the PARALLEL TESTIMONIES with the history ?

A. The letters of St. Paul, and of the other apostles, which have come down to us. Those of St. Paul, are addressed to the churches of Corinth, Philippi, Thessalonica, the church of Galatia, and, if the inscription be right, of Ephesus ; his ministry at all which places is recorded in the history ; to the churches of Colosse and Laodicea jointly, which he had not then visited ; they recognize by reference the churches of Judea, of Asia, and "all the churches of the

Gentiles :”* in the epistle to the Romans,† the author delivers a remarkable declaration concerning the extent of his preaching, its efficacy, and the cause to which he ascribes it.—In that to the Colossians,‡ is an oblique but very strong signification of the then general state of the Christian mission. The first epistle of Peter accosts the Christians dispersed throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.

Q. How far are these accounts confirmed by *other* evidence ?

A. Tacitus, in relating the fire which happened at Rome in the tenth year of Nero, speaks of a *vast multitude* of Christians. This testimony is from an historian of great reputation, living near the time ; a stranger and an enemy ; and it joins immediately with the period of the Scripture accounts. It establishes this point, that the converts were then so numerous at Rome, that, of those who were betrayed by the information of the persons first persecuted, a great multitude (*multitudo ingens*) were discovered and seized.

Next in order of time, and perhaps superior in importance, is the testimony of Pliny, the Roman governor of Pontus and Bithynia. In his letter, to Trajan, are the following sentences among others :—“ Suspending all judicial proceedings, I have recourse to you for advice ; on account of the great number of persons who are in danger of

* 1 Thess. ii. 14.

† Rom. xv. 18, 19.

‡ Col. i. 23.

suffering. Nor has the contagion of this superstition seized cities only, but the lesser towns also, and the open country. Nevertheless it seemed to me, that it may be restrained and corrected. It is certain that the temples, which were almost forsaken, begin to be more frequented, &c. Whence it is easy to imagine what numbers of men might be reclaimed, if pardon were granted to those that shall repent."

Q. What does the passage here quoted, prove ?

A. Not only that the Christians in Pontus and Bithynia were now numerous, but that they had subsisted there for some considerable time.

It was not fourscore years after the crucifixion, when Pliny wrote this letter. Bithynia and Pontus were at a great distance from Judea ; yet in these provinces, Christianity had long subsisted, and Christians were now in vast numbers.

Nor does any evidence remain to prove that the Christians were more numerous in Pontus and Bithynia than in other parts of the Roman empire ; nor has any reason been offered to show why they should be so.

Q. What are the remarkable words of Justin Martyr, who wrote about thirty years after Pliny ?

A. " There is not a nation either Greek or barbarian, or of any other name, even of those who wander in tribes and live in tents, amongst whom prayers and thanksgivings are not offered to the Father and Creator of the Universe by the name of the crucified Jesus."

Q. How do Tertullian and Clemens Alex. who

come about fifty years after Justin, appeal to the Roman governors ?

A. " We were but of yesterday, and we have filled your cities, islands, towns, and boroughs, the camp, the senate, and the forum." &c. We allow, that these expressions may be called declamatory. But even declamation hath its bounds ; this public boasting upon a subject which must be known to every reader, would be unnatural, unless the truth of the case, in a considerable degree, corresponded with the description. Clemens Alexandrinus, introduces a comparison between the success of Christianity, and that of the most celebrated philosophical institutions.*

Q. What may be said of Origen, who follows Tertullian only thirty years ?

A. He delivers nearly the same account,† and in another passage, he draws the following candid comparison between the state of Christianity in his time, and the more primitive ages : " By the good providence of God, the Christian religion has so flourished and increased continually, that it is now preached freely without molestation, although there were a thousand obstacles to the spreading of the doctrine of Jesus in the world. But as it was the will of God that the Gentiles should have the benefit of it, all the counsels of men against the Christians were defeated."‡

Q. What took place within less than 80 years after this ?

* Strom. lib. vi. ad fin. † Orig. in Cels. lib. 1.

‡ Orig. cont. Cels. lib. vii.

A. The Roman empire became Christian under Constantine ; and probably Constantine declared himself on the side of the Christians, because they were the most powerful party ; for Arnobius, who wrote immediately before Constantine's accession, speaks of the whole world as filled with Christ's doctrine, &c. And not more than twenty years after Constantine's entire possession of the empire, Julius Firmicus Maternus calls upon the emperors Constantius and Constans to extirpate the relics of the ancient religion ; the reduced and fallen condition of which is fully described by him. Fifty years afterwards, Jerome, represents the decline of Paganism in language which conveys the same idea of its approaching extinction. Were therefore the motives of Constantine's conversion ever so problematical, the easy establishment of Christianity, and the ruin of Heathenism under him and his immediate successors, is of itself a proof of the progress which Christianity had made in the preceeding period.

Q. What may help to convey to us some notion of the extent and progress of Christianity, or rather of the character, learning, and labours of many early Christians ?

A. To notice the number of Christian *writers* who flourished in these ages. Saint Jerome's catalogue contains 66 writers within the first three centuries, and the first six years of the fourth ; and 54 between that time and his own, *viz.* A. D. 392. Jerome thus introduces his catalogue :—"Let those who say the church has had

no philosophers, nor learned men, observe who and what they were who founded, established, and adorned it; let them cease to accuse our faith of rusticity, and confess their mistake." Of these writers, several, as Justin, Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, Bardasanes, Hippolitus, Eusebius, were voluminous. Christian writers abounded about the year 178. Alexander, bishop of Jerusalem, founded a library in that city, A. D. 212. Pamphilus, the friend of Origen, founded a library at Cesarea, A. D. 294. Public defences were also set forth, by various advocates of the religion, in the course of its first three centuries. Within 100 years after Christ's ascension, Quadratus and Aristides, and, about twenty years afterwards, Justin Martyr, presented apologies for the Christian religion to Roman emperors; Melito, bishop of Sardi, Apollinaris, bishop of Hierapolis, and Miltiades, men of great reputation, did the same, twenty years after; and ten years after this, Apollonius composed an apology for his faith, which he read in the senate, and which was afterwards published. Fourteen years after this, Tertullian addressed his work to the governors of provinces in the Roman empire; and, about the same time, Minucius Felix composed a defence of the Christian religion, which is still extant; and, shortly after the conclusion of this century, copious defences of Christianity, were published by Arnobius and Lactantius

SECTION II.

REFLECTIONS ON THE PRECEDING ACCOUNT.

Q. In viewing the progress of Christianity to what is our attention due?

A. First, to the number of converts at Jerusalem, immediately after its Founder's death; because this success was a success at the *time*, and *spot*, when and where the chief part of the history had been transacted.

Secondly, to the early establishment of numerous Christian societies in Judea and Galilee; which countries had been the scene of Christ's ministry, and where the memory of what had passed, and the knowledge of what was alleged, must have still been fresh and certain.

Thirdly, to the success of the apostles and their companions, both within and without Judea; because it was the credit given to original witnesses, appealing for credit to what themselves had seen and heard. The effect also of their preaching confirms the truth of what our history relates, that they were able to exhibit supernatural attestations to their missions.

Lastly, to the *subsequent* growth and spread of the religion, of which we receive successive intimations, and satisfactory, though general and occasional accounts, until its full and final establishment.

Q. Why is the history in all these several stages without a parallel ?

A. It must be observed, that we have not now been tracing the progress and prevalency of an opinion, founded upon philosophical or critical arguments, upon mere deductions of reason, or construction of ancient writings but of a system, the very basis of which was a supernatural character ascribed to a particular person ; of a doctrine, the truth whereof depended entirely upon the truth of a matter of fact then recent.

If men, in these days, be Christians in consequence of education, submission to authority, or compliance with fashion, the very contrary of this, at the beginning, was the case. The first Christians, and millions who succeeded them, became such in opposition to all these motives.

Q. What is a fair way to judge of this line of argument ?

A. To compare what we have seen on the subject, with the success of Christian missions in modern ages, and to consider the inconsiderable effect that has followed the labours of missionaries. What had the apostles to assist them in propagating Christianity which the missionaries have not ? These men have piety and zeal, sanctity of life and manners, together with education and learning superior to all the apostles ; and that not only absolutely, but, what is of more importance, *relatively*, in comparison with those amongst whom they exercise their office. The intrinsic excellency of the religion, and the per-

fection of its morality, &c. remain the same ; the modern missionaries come also from a people to which the Indian world look up with deference. The apostles came under the name of Jews, which was a character despised and derided. If it be disgraceful in India to become a Christian, it could not be much less so to be enrolled amongst those, "*quos per flagitia invisos, vulgus Christianos appellabat.*" If the religions encountered be considered, the difference will not be great. The theology of both was nearly the same. The sacred rites of the western polythism were gay, festive, and licentious ; the rites of the public religion in the East partake of the same character with a more avowed indecency.

On both sides of the comparison, the popular religion had a strong establishment. In both, the prevailing mythology was destitute of any proper evidence. In both, the established superstition held the same place in the public opinion ; credited by the bulk of the people, but by the learned either derided, or regarded as only fit for political uses.

Q. If it should be allowed, that the ancient Heathens believed in their religion less generally than the present Indians do, would this circumstance afford any facility to the work of the apostles, above that of the modern missionaries ?

A. No. A disbelief of the established religion has no tendency to dispose men for the reception of another ; but, on the contrary, it generates a settled contempt of all religious pretensions what-

ever. General infidelity is the hardest soil which the propagators of a new religion can have to work upon.

Q. From the widely disproportionate success which attended the ministry of Christ and his apostles compared with that of the modern missionaries, what conclusion may we fairly draw?

A. That they possessed means of conviction which we have not; that they had proofs to appeal to, which we want.

SECTION III.

OF THE RELIGION OF MAHOMET.

Q. What is the only event in the history of the human species, which admits of comparison with the propagation of Christianity?

A. The success of the Mahometan institution, which was rapid in its progress, recent in its history, and founded upon a supernatural or prophetic character assumed by its author.

Q. In these articles, the resemblance with Christianity is confessed. But there are points of difference, which separate the two cases entirely: what are they?

A. I. Mahomet did not found his pretensions upon miracles, capable of being known and at-

tested by others. By the evidence of the Koran, Mahomet himself not only does not affect the power of working miracles, but expressly disclaims it. Many passages of that book furnish direct proofs of this truth: "The infidels say, Unless a sign be sent down unto him from his lord, we will not believe; thou art a preacher only." &c. &c. There is only one place in the Koran in which it can be pretended that a sensible miracle is referred to; but the Mahometan expositors disagree in their interpretation of this passage.

After these authentic *confessions* of the Koran, we are not to be moved with miraculous stories related of Mahomet by his historian Abulfeda, who wrote about 600 years after his death, or which are in the legend of Al-Jannabi, who came 200 years later. On the contrary, from comparing Mahomet's own words with those of his followers, the fair conclusion is, that when the religion was established by conquest, then, and not till then, came out the stories of his miracles.

Q. How does this difference alone constitute a bar to all reasoning from one case to the other?

A. Admit the whole of Mahomet's authentic history, so far as it was capable of being known or witnessed by others, to be true, and Mahomet might still be an impostor, or an enthusiast, or an union of both. Admit to be true almost any part of Christ's history, of that which was public and within the cognizance of his followers, and he

must have come from God. Where matter of fact is not in question, where miracles are not alleged, the progress of a religion is not a better argument of its truth, than the prevalency of any system of opinions in natural religion, morality, or physics, is a proof of the truth of those opinions.

II. Q. How was the establishment of Mahomet's religion effected by causes which in no degree appertained to the origin of Christianity?

A. During the first 12 years of his mission, Mahomet had recourse only to persuasion. And there is reason from the effect to believe, that, if he had confined himself to this mode of propagating his religion, we should never have heard either of him or it. "Three years were silently employed in the conversion of *fourteen* proselytes. For ten years, the religion advanced with a slow and painful progress, within the walls of Mecca."* Yet this progress, such as it was, appears to have been aided by some very important advantages which Mahomet found in his situation, in his mode of conducting his design, and in his doctrine.

Q. What were these advantages?

A. 1. Mahomet was grandson of the most powerful family in Mecca; considerable by his wealth, of high descent, and nearly allied to the chiefs of his country.

* Gibbon's Hist. vol. ix. p. 244. et seq.; ed. Dub.

2. He conducted his design, in the outset especially, with great art and prudence, as a politician would conduct a plot. For three years every thing was transacted in secret. Then upon the strength of his allies, and under the powerful protection of his family, he commenced his public preaching; and it is certain that the first proselytes all ultimately attained to riches and honors, the command of armies, and the government of kingdoms.

3. The Arabs deduced their descent from Abraham through the line of Ishmaël; and acknowledged, as may be collected from the Koran, one supreme Deity, though they had associated with him many objects of idolatrous worship. The great doctrine with which Mahomet set out, was the strict and exclusive unity of God. Abraham, he told them, Ishmaël, Moses, and Jesus, had all asserted the same thing: that their followers had universally corrupted the truth, which *he* was now commissioned to restore; thus holding out a specious doctrine, and authorized by venerable names.

4. In the institution which Mahomet joined with this fundamental doctrine, we may discover two purposes pervading the whole, *viz.* to make converts, and to make these converts soldiers.

Q. From what particulars is this evident?

A. 1. When Mahomet began to preach, his address to the Jews, to the Christians, and to the Pagan Arabs, was, that the religion which he

taught was no other than what had been originally their own.*

2. The author of the Koran never ceases from describing the future anguish of unbelievers, their despair, regret, penitence, and torment. It is the point which he labours above all others.

3. On the other hand, his voluptuous paradise, his robes of silk, his palaces and houries, &c. are well fitted to intoxicate the imaginations, and seize the passions, of his Eastern followers.

4. But Mahomet's highest heaven was reserved for those who fought his battles, or expended their fortunes in his cause.†

5. His doctrine of predestination was applicable, and applied by him, to the same purpose.‡

6. In warm regions, the sexual appetite is ardent, the passion for inebriating liquors moderate. In compliance with this distinction, although Mahomet laid a restraint upon the drinking of wine, in the use of women he allowed an almost unbounded indulgence.§

Q. What has hitherto been collected, relates to the 12 or 13 years of Mahomet's peaceable preaching; which part alone of his life and enterprize admits of any comparison with the origin of Christianity. What new scene is now unfolded?

A. The city of Medina was at that time dis-

* Sale's Koran, c. ii. p. 17. Ib. c. xlii. p. 393. Ib. c. xxii. p. 281.

† Sale's Koran, c. iv. p. 73. ‡ Sale's Koran, c. iii. p. 54.

§ Sale's Koran, c. iv. p. 63. Gibbon, vol. ix. p. 225.

tracted by the hereditary contentions of two hostile tribes. These feuds were exasperated by the mutual persecutions of the Jews and Christians, and of the different Christian sects. The religion of Mahomet presented, in some measure, a point of union or compromise, and embraced the principles which were common to them all.

This recommendation procured it instantly a more favourable reception at Medina, than after 12 painful endeavours, it could obtain at Mecca. Yet, after all, the progress of the religion was inconsiderable. Its author's missionary could only collect a congregation of forty persons. It was not by a religious, but by a political association, that Mahomet ultimately made his public entry, and was received as a sovereign at Medina.

From this time, or soon after, the impostor changed his language and conduct. Having now a town, in which he might arm his party, and head them with security, he pretends that a divine commission is given him to attack the Infidels, to destroy idolatry, and to set up the true faith by the sword. An early victory over a very superior force, established his renown, and every succeeding year was marked by battles or assassinations.

From this time we have nothing left to account for, but that Mahomet should collect an army, that his army should conquer, and that his religion should proceed together with his conquests. From all sides, the roving Arabs crowded round the standard of religion and plunder,

and beside the highly painted joys of a carnal paradise, received a liberal division of the spoils. That Mahomet's conquests should carry his religion along with them, will excite little surprise, when we know the conditions which he proposed to the vanquished. Death or conversion was the only choice offered to idolaters. To the Jews and Christians was left the milder alternative of subjection and tribute, if they persisted in their own religion, or of an equal participation in the rights and privileges of the faithful, if they embraced Mahometanism. Add to all which, that Mahomet's victories not only operated by the natural effect of conquest, but that they were constantly represented, both to his friends and enemies, as divine declarations in his favour. Success was evidence.

The prosperity of Mahometanism during this, and every future period, bears so little resemblance to the early propagation of Christianity, that no inference whatever can be justly drawn from it to the prejudice of the latter. For, what are we comparing? A Galilean peasant accompanied by a few fishermen, with a conqueror at the head of his army. We compare Jesus, without force, power, or support, without one external circumstance of attraction or influence, prevailing against the prejudices, the learning, the hierarchy of his country; against the ancient religious opinions, the pompous rites, philosophy, and authority of the Roman empire, in its most enlightened period; with Mahomet, making his

way amongst Arabs, collecting followers in the midst of triumphs, in the darkest ages and countries of the world.

The success therefore of Mahometanism, stands not in the way of this important conclusion,—that the propagation of Christianity, in the manner, and under the circumstances in which it was propagated, is *unique* in the history of the species. A Jewish Peasant overthrew the religion of the world.

PART III.

A BRIEF CONSIDERATION OF SOME POPULAR OBJECTIONS.

CHAP. I.

THE DISCREPANCIES BETWEEN THE SEVERAL GOSPELS.

Q. What does Paley notice as a rash and unphilosophical conduct of our understanding?

A. To reject the substance of a story, by reason of some diversity in the circumstances with which it is related.

Q. Why so?

A. Because the usual character of human testimony is substantial truth under circumstantial variety.

When accounts of a transaction come from different witnesses, we may generally pick out apparent or real inconsistencies. On the contrary, a close and minute agreement induces the suspicion of confederacy and fraud. Neither important variations, nor absolute and final contradictions are deemed sufficient to shake the credibility of the main fact.

Q. What examples does Paley give of this ?

A. The embassy of the Jews to deprecate the execution of Claudian's order to erect his statue in their temple, is placed by Philo *in harvest*, by Josephus *in seed-time* ; both contemporary writers. No reader is led by this inconsistency to doubt, whether such an embassy was sent, or whether such an order was given. Our own history supplies an example of the same kind, in the account of the Marquis of Argyll's death, in the reign of Charles II. Lord Clarendon relates that he was condemned to be hanged, which was performed the same day : on the contrary, Burnet, Woodrow, Heath, Echard, concur in stating that he was condemned on the Saturday, and *beheaded* on the Monday. Yet no reader of English history ever doubted whether the Marquis was executed or not.

Q. From what does much of the discrepancy observable in the Gospels arise ?

A. From *omission* ; from a fact or a passage of Christ's life being noticed by one writer, which is unnoticed by another.

Q. Now why is *omission* at all times a very uncertain ground of objection ?

A. We perceive it, not only in the comparison of different writers, but even in the same writer, when compared with himself. Many important particulars, mentioned by Josephus in his *Antiquities*, ought to have been put down by him in the *Jewish Wars*. Suetonius, Tacitus, Dio Cassius, have, all three, written of the reign of

Tiberius. Each has mentioned many things omitted by the rest, yet no objection is from thence taken to the respective credit of their histories.

But these discrepancies will be still more numerous, when men do not write histories but *memoirs* ; which is perhaps the proper description of our Gospels : that is, when they do not undertake, in order of time, a regular account of *all* the things of importance which the subject of their history, did or said ; but only, out of many similar ones, to give such passages, actions, and discourses, as offered themselves more immediately to their attention, came in the way of their inquiries, occurred to their recollection, or were suggested by their *particular design* at the time of writing.

Q. This particular design may appear sometimes, but not always, nor often. What, particular design therefore, does it seem St. Matthew had in view whilst he was writing the history of the resurrection ?

A. To attest the faithful performance of Christ's promise to his disciples to go before them into Galilee ; because he alone, except Mark, has recorded this promise, and he alone has confined his narrative to that single appearance to the disciples which fulfilled it. It was the preconcerted, the great and most public manifestation of our Lord's person. It dwelt upon Saint Matthew's mind, and he adapted his narrative to it. But, that there is nothing in St. Matthew's language, which negatives other ap-

pearances, or which imports that this was his first or only appearance, is made pretty evident by St. Mark's Gospel, which uses the same terms concerning the appearance in Galilee as St. Matthew uses, yet itself records two other appearances prior to this: (xiv. 7.) We might be apt to infer from these words. that this was the *first* time they were to see him ; yet the historian himself did not perceive that he was leading us to any such conclusion ; for in the twelfth and two following verses of this chapter, he informs us of two appearances, which, by comparing the order of events, are shown to have been prior to the appearance in Galilee.

Probably the same observation, concerning the *particular design* which guided the historian, may be of use in comparing many other passages of the Gospels.

CHAP. II.

ERRONEOUS OPINIONS IMPUTED TO THE APOSTLES.

Q. What species of candour, shewn towards every other book, is sometimes refused to the Scriptures.

A The placing of a distinction between judgment and testimony.

Q. How do you explain this ?

A. We do not usually question the credit of a writer, by reason of an opinion he may have delivered upon subjects unconnected with his evidence : and even upon subjects connected with his account, we naturally separate facts from opinions, testimony from observation, narrative from argument.

Q. To apply this equitable consideration to the Christian records : much controversy and objection has been raised concerning the quotations of the O. T. found in the New ; some of which, it is said, are applied in a sense, and to events, apparently different from that which they bear, and from those to which they belong in the original. In what sense is it probable, that many of those quotations were intended by the writers of the N. T. ?

A. As nothing more than *accommodations*. They quoted passages of their Scripture, which suited the occasion before them, without always undertaking to assert, that the occasion was in the view of the author of the words. Such accommodations of passages from old authors, are common with writers of all countries ; but in none, perhaps, were more to be expected than in the writings of the Jews, whose literature was almost entirely confined to their Scriptures.

Q. Another error imputed to the first Christians, was the expected approach of the day of judgment. Paley introduces this objection by a

remark upon what appears a somewhat similar example : what is this ?

A. Our Saviour, speaking to Peter of John, said, " If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee ?" These words, we find, had been so misconstrued, as that a report from thence " went abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die." Suppose that this had come down to us amongst the prevailing opinions of the early Christians, and that the particular circumstances from which the mistake sprang had been lost, some, at this day, would have been ready to regard and quote the error, as an impeachment of the whole Christian system.

Q. In what is the difficulty attending the subject of this chapter contained ?

A. In this question : if we once admit the fallability of the apostolic judgment, where are we to stop, or in what can we rely upon it ?

Q. To which question, as arguing with unbelievers, for the substantial truth of the Christian history, and for that alone, what is it competent to reply ?

A. Give me the apostles' testimony, and I do not stand in need of their judgment ; give me the facts, and I have complete security for every conclusion I want.

Q. But is this the only answer which the question is capable of receiving ?

A. No : the two following cautions, founded in the most reasonable distinctions, will exclude

all uncertainty upon this head which can be attended with danger.

First, to separate what was the declared object of the apostolic mission, from what was extraneous, or only incidentally connected with it. Of points clearly extraneous to the religion, nothing need be said: Of points incidentally connected with it, something may be added. Demoniactal possession is one of these points. The doctrine was not what Christ brought into the world: it appears in the records, incidentally, as being the subsisting opinion of the age and country. It was no part of the object of *his* revelation, to regulate men's opinions concerning the action of spiritual substances upon animal bodies. At any rate it is unconnected testimony.

Secondly, in reading the apostolic writings, to distinguish between their doctrines and their arguments. Their doctrines came to them by revelation properly so called; yet in propounding these doctrines in their writings or discourses, they were wont to illustrate, support, and enforce them, by such analogies, arguments, and considerations, as their own thoughts suggested. Thus the admission of the Gentiles to the Christian profession without a previous subjection to the law of Moses, was imparted to the apostles by revelation, and attested by miracles. The apostles' own assurance of the matter rested upon this foundation. Nevertheless, St. Paul, offers a great variety of topics in its proof and vindication. The doctrine itself must be received: but it is

not necessary, to defend the propriety of every comparison, or the validity of every argument, which he has brought into the discussion.

CHAP III.

THE CONNEXION OF CHRISTIANITY WITH THE JEWISH HISTORY.

Q. What does our Saviour undoubtedly recognize in the Mosaic institution ?

A. Its divine origin : and, independently of his authority, it is difficult to assign any other cause for the Jews' adhering to the unity of God, when every other people slid into polytheism ; for their being men in religion, but children in every thing else. Undoubtedly, also, our Saviour recognizes the prophetic character of many of their ancient writers.

Q. How far then are we bound as Christians to go ?

A. As far as these recognitions by our Saviour.

Q. But what do we do in making Christianity answerable with its life, for the circumstantial truth of each separate passage of the O. T., as well as the information, fidelity, and judgment, of every writer in it ?

A. We bring unnecessary difficulties into the whole system.

Q. How do you shew this ?

A. These books were universally read, and received by the Jews of our Saviour's time. He and his apostles referred to them, alluded to them, used them. Yet, except where he ascribes a divine authority to particular predictions, we cannot strictly draw any conclusion from the books being so used and applied, beside the proof of their notoriety and reception. In this view, our Scriptures afford a valuable testimony to those of the Jews. But the nature of this testimony ought to be understood. It is very different from a specific ratification of each particular fact and opinion, and of the motives assigned for every action, together with the judgment of praise or dispraise bestowed upon them.

Q. What instances does Paley give in this case ?

A. St. James, in his Epistle, says, "Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord." Notwithstanding this text, the reality of Job's history, has been always deemed a fair subject of inquiry and discussion amongst Christian divines. St. Paul, in his Second Epistle to Timothy, has this similitude ; "Now, as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth." These names are not found in the O. T. And it is uncertain, whether St. Paul took them from some apocryphal writing then extant, or from tradition. But no one ever imagined, that he is here asserting its authority.

Q. Does Paley mean to say that other passages of the Jewish history stand upon no better evidence?

A. No: but that a reference in the N. T. to a passage in the Old, does not so fix its authority, as to exclude all inquiry into its credibility, or into the separate reasons upon which that credibility is founded.

Q. Why has he thought it necessary to state this point explicitly?

A. Because a fashion, revived by Voltaire, and pursued by his disciples, has prevailed of late, of attacking Christianity through the sides of Judaism. Some objections of this class are founded in misconstruction, some in exaggeration; but all proceed upon a supposition, unsupported by argument, *viz.* that the attestation which the Author and first teachers of Christianity gave to the divine mission of Moses and the prophets, extends to every portion of the Jewish history.

CHAP. IV.

REJECTION OF CHRISTIANITY.

Q. We acknowledge that the Christian religion did not produce an universal, or even a general conviction. What has this want of a more complete success been called?

A. A *rejection* of the Christian history and

miracles ; and has been thought by some to form a strong objection to the reality of the facts which the history contains.

Q. Into how many parts does this objection divide itself ?

A. Into two : (1) as it relates to the Jews, (2) as it relates to the Heathens.

Q. How does Paley treat the first part of this objection ?

A. Upon the subject of the truth of Christianity with *us*, there is but one question, *viz.* whether the miracles were actually wrought ? From acknowledging the miracles, we pass instantaneously to the acknowledgment of the whole. This reasoning is become so familiar, that we do not readily apprehend how it could ever have been otherwise. Yet it appears certain, that the state of thought in a Jew of our Saviour's age, was totally different from this. After allowing the reality of the miracle, he had much to do to persuade himself that Jesus was the Messiah. This is clearly intimated by various passages of the Gospel history.

See John vii. 21—31. which ends with these extraordinary words, *And many of the people believed on him, and said, When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than those which this man hath done ?*

This passage exhibits the reasoning of different sorts of persons upon the occasion of a miracle, which persons of all sorts are represented to have acknowledged as real. Yet none of them con-

sidered the miracle as of itself decisive of the question ; as what, if once allowed, excluded all further debate upon the subject ; but they founded their opinion upon a kind of comparative reasoning.

Another passage in the same evangelist, and observable for the same purpose, is that in which he relates the resurrection of Lazarus : (xi. 43, 44.) One might have expected, that at least all those who stood by the sepulchre, would have believed in Jesus. Yet the evangelist does not so represent it. We cannot suppose he meant to leave his readers to imagine that any of the spectators doubted about the truth of the miracle. He does not however mean to impute the defect of their belief to any doubt about the miracles ; but to their not perceiving, what all now perceive, and what they would have perceived, but for strong prejudices, the infallible attestations which the works of Jesus bore to the truth of his pretensions.

Similar observations might be made upon the ninth chapter of St. John's Gospel, containing a very circumstantial account of the cure of a blind man ; a miracle submitted to all the scrutiny and examination which a sceptic could propose.

-Q. If it shall be inquired, how a turn of thought, so different from what prevails at present, should be current with the ancient Jews ; where is the answer found ?

A. In two opinions, which subsisted in that age and country ; The one was, their expectation of a Messiah totally contrary in appearance to

Jesus; the other, their persuasion of the agency of demons in supernatural effects. These opinions, are not *supposed* for the purpose of argument, but are evidently recognized in the Jewish writings, as well as in ours. These two opinions conjointly afford an explanation of their conduct. The first put them upon seeking out some excuse to themselves for not receiving Jesus in the character which he claimed; and the second supplied them with just such an excuse as they wanted.

Q. What else does this state of opinion discover?

A. Why the Jews should reject miracles which they saw, yet rely so much upon the tradition of them in their own history. It never entered into the minds of those who lived in the time of Moses and the prophets, to ascribe *their* miracles to the agency of evil beings. The authority of Moses and the prophets being established, as the foundation of polity and religion, it was not probable that the later Jews, brought up in a reverence for that religion and the subject of that polity, should apply to their history a reasoning which tended to overthrow the foundation of both.

Q. How does Paley treat the second part of the objection?

A. The infidelity of the Gentile world, especially that of men of rank and learning in it, is resolvable into a principle, which will account for the inefficacy of any argument or evidence whatever, *viz.* contempt prior to examination. The state of religion among the Greeks and Ro-

mans tended to induce this disposition. Dionysius Halicarnassensis remarks, that there were 600 different kinds of religions or sacred rites exercised at Rome. The superior classes treated them all as fables. Can we wonder then, that Christianity was included in the number, without inquiry into the particular grounds of its pretensions? It had nothing in its character to engage their notice. It mixed with no politics, produced no fine writers, contained no curious speculations. When it did reach their knowledge, it appeared to them a very strange system,—unphilosophical,—dealing little in argument and discussion. What is said of Jesus, of his nature, office, and ministry, would be, in the highest degree, alien from the conceptions of their theology.

Christianity was presented also to the imagination of the learned Heathen under additional disadvantage, by reason of its real, and still more of its nominal, connexion with Judaism. It shared in the ridicule with which that people and their religion were treated by the Greeks and Romans. With what carelessness they judged, of these matters, appears from an example of Tacitus, who, in a grave discourse upon the history of the Jews, states, that they worshipped the effigy of an ass.* The same foolish charge is also confidently repeated by Plutarch.†

All these considerations are of a nature to operate with the greatest force upon the highest

* Tacit. Hist. lib. v. c. 2. † Sympos lib. iv. quæst. 5.

ranks ; upon the philosophical also, as well as the libertine character ; upon the Antonines or Julian, not less than upon Nero or Domitian. They would also acquire strength from the prejudice which men of rank and learning entertain against any thing that *originates* with the vulgar and illiterate.

Q. In the mean time how was Christianity proceeding ?

A. It was still making its way ; and, amidst so many impediments to its progress, its actual success is rather to be wondered at, than that it should not have universally conquered scorn and indifference, or, opened for itself a passage to the hearts and understandings of the scholars of the age.

Q. What else does the cause here assigned for the rejection of Christianity by men of rank and learning, namely, a strong antecedent contempt, accounts for ?

A. Their *silence*. If they had rejected it upon examination, they would have written about it ; they would have given their reasons. Whereas what men repudiate upon some prefixed persuasion, or settled contempt, they do not naturally write about, or notice much in what they write upon other subjects.

Q. How do the letters of the Younger Pliny furnish an example of this silence, and let us, in some measure, into the cause of it ?

A. From his celebrated correspondence with Trajan, we know that he had just inquired, whe-

ther the religion contained any opinions dangerous to government; but of its doctrines, evidences, or books, he had not informed himself with any degree of care; he had regarded the whole with negligence and disdain.

Q. What may be observed of Tacitus?

A. The name which he has given to Christianity, "*exitiabilis superstitio*," (a pernicious superstition), and by which he disposes of the whole question of the merits of the religion, afford a proof how little he knew, or concerned himself to know, about the matter. Would any unbeliever of the present age apply this epithet to the Christianity of the N. T. or not allow that it was entirely unmerited? Read the instructions given by a great teacher of this religion, to those very Roman converts of whom Tacitus speaks, a very few years before the time of which he is speaking.*

Read this, and then think of "*exitiabilis superstitio*!"

Q. But if we be not allowed to produce our books against the Heathen authority, what may at least be permitted?

A. To confront theirs with one another. Of this "*pernicious superstition*," what could Pliny find to blame, when he instituted something like an examination into the conduct and principles of the sect? He discovered nothing, but that they were wont to meet together on a stated day before

* See Romans xij. 9.—xiii. 13.

it was light, and sing among themselves a hymn to Christ as a God, and to bind themselves by an oath, not to the commission of any wickedness, but to be guiltless of theft, robbery, or adultery; never to falsify their word, nor to deny a pledge committed to them, when called upon to return it.

Q. From the words of Tacitus what observations may we draw?

First; That we are warranted in calling the view which the learned men of that age took of Christianity, an obscure and distant view. Had Tacitus known more of it, of its precepts, duties, or design, however he had discredited the story, he would have respected the principle. He would have described the religion differently, though he had rejected it.

Secondly: we may remark, how little reliance can be placed upon the most acute judgments, in subjects which they are pleased to despise. Had not Christianity survived to tell its own story, it must have gone down to posterity as a "pernicious superstition;" upon the credit of Tacitus's account, strengthened by the name of the writer, and the reputation of his sagacity.

Thirdly; That this contempt prior to examination, is an intellectual vice, from which men of the greatest faculties of mind are not free. Indeed they are perhaps most subject to it. Such feel themselves seated upon an eminence, and look down from their height upon the follies of mankind. This habit of thought is very apt to produce hasty, contemptuous, and, by consequence, erroneous judgments.

Fourthly ; We need not be surprised at many writers not mentioning Christianity, when they who did so entirely misconceived its nature and character ; and, in consequence, regarded it with negligence and contempt.

To the knowledge of the greatest part of learned Heathens, the facts of the Christian history could only come by report. The books, probably, they had never looked into. The settled habit of their minds long had been, an indiscriminate rejection of all such reports. With such, truth has no chance. It depends upon distinction. If they would not inquire, how should they be convinced ?

Q. Into what two classes is it not unreasonable to suppose, that the heathen public, especially that part which is made up of men of rank and education, were divided ?

A. Those who despised Christianity beforehand, and those who received it.

Q. In correspondency with which division, how would the writers of that age also be divided ?

A. Into two classes ; those who were silent about Christianity, and those who were Christians.

Q. What else may be alleged ?

A. It is also sufficiently proved, that the notion of magic was resorted to by the heathen adversaries of Christianity, as that of diabolical agency had before been by the Jews. Justin Martyr alleges this as his reason for arguing from prophecy, rather than from miracles. Origen imputes this evasion to Celsus ; Jerome to Porphyry and Lactantius to the heathen in general.

CHAP. V.

That the Christian Miracles are not recited, or appealed to, by early Christian Writers themselves, so fully or frequently as might have been expected.

Q. How does Paley consider this objection?

A. First, as it applies to the letters of the apostles, preserved in the New Testament; and secondly, as it applies to the remaining writings of other early Christians.

Q. How does he treat the first part of the question?

A. The epistles of the apostles are either hortatory or argumentative. So far as they were occupied in delivering lessons of duty, or in fortifying and encouraging the constancy of the disciples under their trials, there appears no occasion for more of these references than we find.

So far as they are argumentative, the nature of their argument accounts for the infrequency of these allusions. These epistles were not written to prove the truth of Christianity. Nothing could be so preposterous as for the disciples of Jesus to dispute amongst themselves, or with others, concerning his office or character, unless they believed that he had shown, by supernatural proofs, that there was something extraordinary in both. Mi-

raculous evidence, therefore, forming not the texture but the ground of these arguments, if it be occasionally discerned, it is exactly so much as ought to take place, supposing the history to be true.

Further it may be added, *that the apostolic epistles resemble in this respect the apostolic speeches*: it is unwarrantable to contend, that the omission, or infrequency, of the recital of miracles in the speeches of the apostles, negatives the existence of the miracles, when the speeches are given in immediate conjunction with the history of those miracles: and a conclusion which cannot be inferred from the speeches, without contradicting the whole tenor of the book which contains them, cannot be inferred from letters, which, in this respect, are similar only to the speeches.

To prove this similitude, it may be remarked, that although in St Luke's Gospel Peter is represented to have been present at many decisive miracles, wrought by Christ; and although the second part of the same history ascribes other decisive miracles to Peter himself, Acts iii. 1. v. 1. ix. 34, 40. yet out of six speeches of Peter, there are but two in which reference is made to the miracles wrought by Christ; and only one in which he refers to miraculous powers possessed by himself.

Stephen's long speech contains no reference whatever to miracles, though it be expressly related of him almost immediately before the speech,

“that he did great wonders and miracles among the people.” Again, although miracles be expressly attributed to St. Paul in the Acts both generally, and in specific instances, at all which miracles, except the first two, the historian himself was present: yet in the speeches given as delivered by him, in the same book in which the miracles are related, the appeals to his own miracles, or indeed to any miracles at all, are rare and incidental.

Agreeably hereunto, in thirteen letters ascribed to St. Paul, we have incessant references to Christ's resurrection, and his own conversion, three indubitable references to the miracles he wrought; four other less direct references to the same: but more copious or circumstantial recitals we have not. The consent therefore between Paul's speeches and letters, is sufficiently exact: and the reason in both is the same; namely, that the miraculous history was *presupposed*, and that the question was this: whether, allowing the history of Jesus to be true, he was, upon the strength of it, to be received as the promised Messiah; and, if he was, what were the consequences, object, and benefit of his mission?

Q. How is the second part of the question considered?

A. These general observations, namely, that the subject of which they treated did not lead them to any direct recital of the Christian history, belongs also to the writings of the apostolic fathers. The epistle to Barnabas is much like

the epistle to the Hebrews ; an allegorical application of passages of the Jewish history, law, and ritual, to those parts of the Christian dispensation in which the author perceived a resemblance. That of Clement was written for the sole purpose of quieting dissensions that had arisen in the church of Corinth. The work of Hermas is a vision ; quotes neither the O. T. nor the New. The epistles of Polycarp and Ignatius had for their principal object the order and discipline of the churches which they addressed. Yet, under all these circumstances of disadvantage, the great points of the Christian history are fully recognized.

There is, however, another class of writers, to whom the answer above given does not apply ; and that is, the class of ancient *apologists*, whose design it was to defend Christianity, and to give the reasons of their adherence to it.

The most ancient is Quadratus, who presented his apology to the emperor Adrian. From a passage of his work, preserved in Eusebius, it appears that he did expressly and formally appeal to the miracles of Christ.*

Justin Martyr, who followed Quadratus about 30 years, has touched upon numerous passages of Christ's history. In one quotation, he asserts the performance of miracles by Christ, in words as strong and positive as the language possesses.†

* Euseb. Hist. l. iv. c. 3.

† Just. Dial. p. 258. ed. Thirlby.

Irenæus, who came about 40 years after, notices, as well as Justin, an evasion in the adversaries of Christianity, who ascribed the miracles of our Saviour to magic, and replies to it by the same argument: "But, if they shall say that the Lord performed these things by an illusory appearance (*φαντασιωδῶς*), leading these objectors to the prophecies, we will shew from them, that all things were thus predicted concerning him, and strictly came to pass." Lactantius, who lived a century lower, delivers the same sentiment, upon the same occasion.*

But to return to the Christian apologists in order.—By Tertullian, Origen, and Jerome, (Tertull. Apol. p. 20. Par. 1675. Orig. cont. Cels. lib. ii. § 48. Jerome cont. Vigil.) the miracles of Christ were positively appealed to, as we understand them, in their literal and historical sense, which answers the allegation of the objection.

Q. What however is Paley ready to admit on this subject?

A. That the ancient Christian advocates did not insist upon the miracles in argument, so frequently as he would have done. It was their lot to contend with notions of magical agency, against which the mere production of the facts was not sufficient for the convincing of their adversaries: Perhaps they themselves did not think it quite decisive of the controversy. But since it is proved, that the sparingness with

* Lactan. v. 3.

which they appealed to miracles, was owing neither to their ignorance nor their doubt of the facts, it is an objection, not to the truth of the history, but to the judgment of its defenders.

CHAP. VI.

Want of Universality in the knowledge and reception of Christianity, and of greater clearness in the evidence.

Q. It has been objected, that if a revelation really came from God, the proof of it in all ages would be so public and manifest, that no part of the human species would remain ignorant of it, and no understanding could fail of being convinced by it. How is this answered?

A. The advocates of Christianity do not pretend that the evidence of their religion possesses these qualities. They do not deny it to be within the compass of divine power, to have communicated to the world a higher degree of assurance, and to have given to his communication a stronger and more extensive influence. God *could* have so formed men, as to have perceived the truths of religion intuitively. He could have presented a separate miracle to each man's senses. He could have established a standing miracle, &c.

Q. What then is the question?

A. Not whether Christianity possesses the highest possible degree of evidence, but whether the not having more evidence be a sufficient reason for rejecting that which we have.

Q. What therefore is the fairest method of judging, concerning any dispensation alleged to come from God?

A. To compare it with other things which are acknowledged to be produced by his agency.

Q. How do you make the comparison in the present instance?

A. Throughout that order of nature, of which God is the author, we find a system of *beneficence*: we are seldom or ever able to make out a system of *optimism*, that is, there are few cases in which we cannot suppose something more perfect, and more unobjectionable, than what we see. Yet, does the difference between the real case and the imagined case, or the seeming inferiority of the one to the other, authorize us to say, that the present disposition of nature is not the production or the design of the Deity? Does it check the inference which we draw from the confessed beneficence of his provision? Or does it make us cease to admire his contrivance? To inquire what the Deity might have done, or, as we even sometimes presume to speak, ought to have done, and to build any propositions upon such inquiries against evidence of facts, is wholly unwarrantable.

It is a mode of reasoning which will not do in natural history, or natural religion, and which cannot therefore be applied with safety to revela-

tion. It has no foundation in experience, or in analogy. The general character of the works of nature is goodness both in design and effect, with a liability to difficulty, and objections, by reason of seeming incompleteness or uncertainty. Christianity participates of this character. The true similitude between nature and revelation consists in this : that they each bear strong marks of their original ; that they each also bear appearances of irregularity and defect. A system of strict optimism may nevertheless be the real system in both cases, though the proof be hidden from *us*.

Q. If Christianity be compared with the state and progress of natural religion, will the objector gain anything by the comparison ?

A. No. Are the truths of natural religion written in the skies, or in a language which every one can read ? Or is this the case with the most useful arts, or the most necessary sciences of human life ? The existence of the Deity is left to be collected from observations, which every man does not make, nor perhaps, is capable of making. Can it be argued, that God does not exist, because, if he did, he would discover himself to mankind by proofs which no inadvertency could miss, no prejudice withstand ?

If Christianity be regarded as a providential instrument for the melioration of mankind, its progress and diffusion resembles that of other causes by which human life is improved. The Deity hath not touched the order of nature in vain. The Jewish religion produced great and

permanent effects ; the Christian religion hath done the same. It hath disposed the world to amendment, and it is by no means improbable that it may become universal.

Q. Can we indeed argue concerning Christianity, that it must necessarily be true because it is beneficial, or conclude that it must be false, because it is not so efficacious as we could have supposed ?

A. No—The question of its truth is to be tried upon its proper evidence, without deferring much to this sort of argument, on either side.

What would be the real effect of that overpowering evidence which our adversaries require in a revelation, it is difficult to foretell ; at least, we must speak of it as a dispensation of which we have no experience. Some consequences however would probably attend this economy, which do not seem to befit a revelation from God : irresistible proof would restrain the voluntary powers ; would not answer the purpose of trial and probation ; would call for no exercise of candour, humility, inquiry ; no submission of interests, and prejudices, to moral evidence and to probable truth ; no habits of reflection ; none of that previous desire to learn and to obey the will of God, which forms a test of the virtuous principle.

Q. II. What other inconvenience would arise from these modes of communication ?

A. They would leave no place for the admission of *internal evidence* ; which ought, perhaps, to bear a considerable part in the proof of every

revelation, because it is a species of evidence, which applies itself to the knowledge, love, and practice of virtue. Men of good dispositions amongst Christians, are greatly affected by the impression which the Scriptures make upon their minds. Their conviction is much strengthened by these impressions.

Whereas, may it not be said that irresistible evidence would confound all characters and all dispositions? would subvert, rather than promote, the true purpose of the divine counsels? which is, not to produce *obedience* by a force little short of mechanical constraint, but to treat moral agents agreeably to what they are; which is done, when light and motives are of such kinds, and are imparted in such measures, that the influence of them depends upon the recipients themselves.

Q. III. What may also be asked, concerning the perfect display of a future state of existence?

A. Whether it would be compatible with the activity of civil life, and with the success of human affairs? this impression may be overdone; it may so seize and fill the thoughts, as to leave no place for the duties of men's several stations, and, no sufficient stimulus to secular industry. Of the first Christians we read, "that all that believed were together, and had all things common, &c. This was natural, and what might be expected from miraculous evidence coming with full force upon the senses: but it may be doubted whether, if this state of mind had been universal, or long-continued, the business of the world could

have gone on." We observe that St. Paul frequently recalled his converts to the ordinary labours and duties of their condition; and gave them, in his own example, a lesson of contented application to their worldly employments.

By the manner in which the religion is now proposed, a great portion of the human species is enabled, and induced, to seek and effectuate their salvation, through the medium of Christianity, without any interruption of the prosperity, or of the regular course of human affairs.

CHAP VII.

THE SUPPOSED EFFECTS OF CHRISTIANITY.

Q. What paradox has been supported upon this subject?

A. That a religion, which, under every form in which it is taught, holds forth the final reward of virtue and the punishment of vice, does not produce any good, but rather a bad effect upon public happiness; and very confident appeals have been made to history, and to observation, for the truth of this.

Q. In the conclusions, however, which these writers draw from what they call experience, what two sources of mistake may be perceived?

A. One is, that they look for the influence of religion in the wrong place.

The other, that they charge Christianity with many consequences, for which it is not responsible.

Q. What does Paley assert with regard to the first of these ?

I. A. The influence of religion is not to be sought for in the councils of princes, in the conduct of governments towards their subjects, or towards each other ; of conquerors at the head of armies, or of parties intriguing for power ; but it must be perceived, if at all, in the silent course of domestic life. Nay more ; even *there* its influence may not be very obvious. If it check, in some degree, personal dissoluteness, if it beget a general probity in the transaction of business, if it produce humane manners in the many and occasional exertions of laborious benevolence in a few, it is all which can offer itself to external notice. The kingdom of heaven is within us. That which is the substance of the religion, its hopes and consolations, the devotion of the heart, the controul of the appetite, the direction of the will to the commands of God, is necessarily invisible. Yet upon these depend the virtue and happiness of millions, of whom history knows the least, but upon whom the influence of religion collectively may be of inestimable value.

It also acts upon public usages and institutions, by an operation which is only secondary and indirect. Christianity is not a code of civil law. It can only reach public institutions through private

character. Now its influence upon this may be great, yet many public institutions repugnant to its principles may remain. It may be long before they who compose this body be sufficiently touched with the Christian character, to join in the suppression of practices, to which the public has been reconciled by habit and interest. Nevertheless, the effects of Christianity, even in this view, have been important. It has mitigated the conduct of war, and the treatment of captives: it has softened the administration of despotic governments, abolished polygamy, restrained the licentiousness of divorces, put an end to the exposure of children, &c. &c. Wherever it is professed, it has produced numerous establishments for the relief of sickness and poverty. It has triumphed over the slavery established in the Roman empire, and is contending against the worse slavery of the West Indies.

A Christian writer,* so early as in the second century, has testified the resistance which Christianity made to wicked and licentious practices, though established by law and by public usage.

Yet Socrates did not destroy the idolatry of Athens, or produce the slightest revolution in the manners of his country.

But to recur to our chief argument, that the benefit of religion, being felt chiefly in the obscurity of private station, escapes the observation of history. From the first general notification of

* Bardesanes, ap. Euseb. Præp. Evang. vi. 10.

Christianity to the present day, there have been in every age many millions, whose names were never heard of, made better by it, and happier, in what alone deserves the name of happiness, and consolation of their thoughts.

Also, in every country in which it is professed, it hath obtained a sensible, although not a complete influence, upon the public judgment of morals. And this is very important. For without the occasional correction which public opinion receives, by referring to some fixed standard of morality, no man can foretell into what extravagancies it might wander. Assassination might become as honourable as duelling, and the worst crimes be accounted venial. In this way it is possible, that many may be kept in order by Christianity, who are not themselves Christians. They may be guided by the rectitude which it communicates to public opinion.

After all, the value of Christianity is not to be appreciated by its *temporal* effects. Its object is to influence human conduct in this life; but what is gained to happiness, can only be estimated by taking in the whole of existence. There may be also great consequences of Christianity, which do not belong to it as a revelation. The effects of the mission, and death, of the present and future agency of Christ, may be universal, though the religion be not universally known.

Q. How does Paley reply to the second of these mistakes?

A. Christianity is charged with many conse-

quences for which it is not responsible. Religious motives have probably had no more to do in the formation of nine-tenths of its intolerant and persecuting laws in different countries, than they have had to do in England with the making of the game-laws. These, although they have the religion for their subject, are resolvable into a principle which Christianity certainly did not plant, though it could not universally condemn, which principle is, that they who are in possession of power, do what they can to keep it. Christianity is answerable for no mischief brought upon the world by persecution, except what has arisen from *conscientious* persecutors. Nor to Christianity can even *their* mistake fairly be imputed. They have been misled by an error in their moral philosophy: they pursued the particular, without adverting to the general consequence. Had there been in the N. T. as in the Koran, precepts authorizing coercion in the propagation of the religion, and the use of violence towards unbelievers, the case would have been different.

No species nor degree of persecution, can be defended; but even the fact has probably been exaggerated. The slave trade destroys more in a year, than the Inquisition perhaps hath done since its foundation.

If it be objected, as it may be, that Christianity is chargeable with every mischief of which it has been the *occasion*, though not the motive; we may answer, that, if the malevolent passions be there, the world will never want occasions.

The noxious element of malevolence will always find a conductor. Did the applauded intercommunity of the Pagan theology prevent oppressions, massacres, devastations? Was it bigotry that carried Alexander into the East, or brought Cæsar into Gaul? Europe itself has known no religious wars for some centuries, yet has hardly ever been without war. Are the calamities which have lately afflicted it, to be imputed to Christianity? Did Poland fall by a Christian crusade? Was the overthrow in France of civil order and security, effected by the votaries of our religion or by the foes? In order to be a persecutor, it is not necessary to be a bigot : in rage and cruelty, mischief and destruction, fanaticism itself can be outdone by infidelity.

Finally, if war, as now carried on, produce less misery and ruin than formerly, to Christianity the change is due more than to any other cause. It hath humanized the conduct of wars; it hath ceased to excite them.

The differences of opinion that have in all ages prevailed amongst Christians, fall very much within the alternative which has been stated. If we possessed the disposition which Christianity labours to inculcate, these would do little harm. If that disposition be wanting, other causes, if even these were absent, would continually rise up to call the malevolent passions into action. Differences of opinion, when accompanied with mutual charity, which Christianity forbids them to violate, are for the most part innocent, and for

some purposes useful. They promote inquiry, discussion, and knowledge. They keep up an attention to religious subjects, and a concern about them, which might be apt to die away in the calm and silence of universal agreement.

CHAP. IV.

THE CONCLUSION.

Q. Upon what does much depend in religion?

A. Upon the *order* in which we dispose our inquiries.

Q. How do you shew this?

A. He who takes up a system of divinity with a previous opinion that every part must be true, or the whole false, approaches the discussion with great disadvantage. No other system, founded upon moral evidence, would bear to be so treated. Nevertheless, in a certain degree, we are all introduced to our religious studies, under this prejudice. The weakness of the human judgment in early youth, and its extreme susceptibility, render it necessary to furnish it with *some* opinions and principles : though without much endeavour for this purpose, the tendency of the mind to assimilate itself to the habits which prevail around it, produces the same effect. That indifferency and suspense, that waiting and equilibrium of the

judgment, which some require, and would wish to be aimed at in education, cannot be preserved.

In consequence, the doctrines of religion come to us before the proofs ; and with that mixture of explications and inferences from which no public creed is, or can be free.

Q. What is frequently the effect of this ?

A. That when any articles, which appear as parts of Christianity, contradict the apprehension of those to whom it is proposed, men of rash tempers hastily reject the whole. But this is not the way to do justice, either to themselves, or to the religion ?

Q. What is the rational way of treating a subject of such importance ?

A. To attend to the general and substantial truth of its principles, and to that alone. When we once feel a foundation, and a ground of credibility in its history, we shall safely inquire into the interpretation of its records, and the doctrines deduced from them. Nor will it endanger our faith, or diminish our motives for obedience, if we should discover that these conclusions are formed with different degrees of probability, and possess different degrees of importance.

Q. What may be expected from this conduct of the understanding ?

A. It will uphold personal Christianity, even in those countries where its forms are the most liable to difficulty and objection. It will also further guard us against the prejudices which arise in our minds to its disadvantage, from ob-

serving the controversies carried on among its professors, and of inducing a spirit of moderation in our judgment, as well as in our treatment of those who stand upon sides opposite to ours. What is clear in Christianity, we shall find to be sufficient, and infinitely valuable; what is dubious, unnecessary to be decided, or of very subordinate importance; and what is most obscure, will teach us to bear with the opinions which others may have formed upon the same subject.

A judgment also which is once satisfied of the general truth of the religion, will not only thus discriminate in its doctrines, but will overcome the reluctance of the imagination to admit articles of faith which are attended with difficulty, if such appear to be truly parts of the revelation. It was to be expected, that what related to the economy and persons, of the invisible world, should contain some points remote from our analogies, and from the comprehension of a mind which hath acquired all its ideas from sense and experience.

Q. What does Paley profess has been his great care in the preceding work?

A. To preserve the separation between evidences and doctrines as inviolable as he could; to remove from the primary question all considerations unnecessarily joined with it; and to offer a defence to Christianity, which every Christian might read, without seeing the tenets in which he had been brought up attacked or decried.

Q. And what afforded a satisfaction to his mind?

A. To observe that this was practicable; that few or none of our many controversies with each other affect or relate to the proofs of our religion.

Q. Upon what does the truth of Christianity depend?

A. Upon its leading facts alone; and of these there is evidence which ought to satisfy us, at least until it appear that mankind have ever been deceived by the same.

Q. How does this appear?

A. We have some uncontested and incontestable points, to which the history of the human species hath nothing similar to offer. A Jewish peasant changed the religion of the world, without force, power, ~~and~~ support. Such a thing hath not happened in any other instance. His companions after he himself had been put to death for his attempt, asserted his supernatural character, founded upon his supernatural operations; and, in testimony to the truth of their assertions, and in order to communicate the knowledge to others, voluntarily entered upon lives of hardship, and persecution. This has not a parallel. More particularly, a very few days after this Person had been publicly executed, and in the very city in which he was buried, these his companions declared that his body was restored to life; that they had seen him, handled him, eat with him, conversed with him; and, from their persuasion of these truths preached his religion, in the face of those who had killed him, and who were armed with the power of the country: having done thi

where the event took place, they carried the intelligence of it abroad, in despite of difficulties and opposition, and where they had nothing to expect but derision and outrage.—This is without example. These three facts, are certain, and the Christian story, as to these points, hath never varied. All letters, discourses, and controversy, among the followers of the religion ; all the books written by them, from its commencement to the present time, *concur* in representing these facts in this manner.

Q. Why do these propositions alone lay a foundation for our faith ?

A. They prove the existence of a transaction, which cannot even in its most *general* parts be accounted for upon any reasonable supposition, except that of the truth of the mission.

Q. But the particular *detail* of the miraculous pretences upon which this unexampled transaction rested, and *for* which these men so acted and suffered, it is undoubtedly of great importance for us to know. How do we get this information ?

A. We *have* this detail from the persons themselves ; in accounts by eye-witnesses, by contemporaries and companions of those who were so ; not in one book, but four, each containing enough for the verification, and all agreeing in the fundamental parts of the history. We have the authenticity of these books established, by more and stronger proofs than belong to any other ancient book, and by proofs which distinguish them from any claiming similar authority.

When we open these ancient volumes, we discover in them marks of truth, whether we consider each in itself, or collate them with one another. The writers certainly knew what they were writing about, for they manifest an acquaintance with local circumstances, with the history and usages of the times, which could only belong to inhabitants of that country, living in that age. In each we perceive simplicity and undesignedness; the air and language of reality. When we compare the different narratives, we find them so varying as to repel all suspicion of confederacy; so agreeing, as to show that the accounts had one real transaction for their foundation; often attributing different actions and discourses to the person whose history, or rather memoirs of whose history, they profess to relate, yet so similar, as very much to bespeak the same character; which is a coincidence that could only be the consequence of their writing from fact, and not from imagination.

These four narratives are confined to the history of the founder of the religion, and end with his ministry. The subsequent intelligence hath come down to us in a work purporting to be written by a person connected with the business during its first stages, carrying on the narrative, oftentimes with great particularity, and throughout with good sense, information, and candour; stating all along the origin, and the only probable origin, of effects which unquestionably were produced, together with the natural consequences of situations which unquestionably did

exist ; and *confirmed*, by the strongest possible testimony which a history can receive, in *original letters* written by the principal subject of the history upon the business to which it relates, and during the period, or soon after the period, which it comprises. No man can say that this all together is not a body of strong historical evidence.

Q. When we reflect that some of those from whom the books proceeded, are related to have themselves wrought miracles, to have been the subject of supernatural assistance in propagating the religion, we may be led to think, that more credit, or a different kind of credit, is due to these accounts, than can be claimed by merely human testimony. But can this argument be addressed to sceptics or unbelievers ?

A. No—a man must be a Christian before he can receive it. The inspiration of the historical Scriptures, its nature, degree, and extent, are questions of serious discussion ; but they are questions amongst Christians themselves, and not between them and others. The doctrine itself depends upon the ordinary maxims of historical credibility.

Q. In viewing the detail of miracles thus recorded, how do we find every supposition negatived, by which they can be resolved into fraud or delusion ?

A. They were not secret, nor momentary, nor tentative, nor ambiguous ; nor performed under the sanction of authority, or in affirmance of tenets and practices already established. We find also

the evidence alleged for them, different from that upon which other miraculous accounts rest. It was contemporary, published upon the spot, and it continued ; it involved interests of the greatest magnitude ; it contradicted the most fixed persuasions and prejudices ; it required from those who accepted it, not an indolent assent, but a change of principles and conduct, a submission to consequences the most serious. How such a story should be false, or, if false, how it should make its way, cannot be explained ; yet such the Christian story was, and in opposition to such difficulties did it prevail.

Q. It was perhaps to be expected that an event so connected with the religion and fortunes of the Jews, as one of their race establishing his authority and law throughout a great portion of the civilized world, should be noticed in the prophetic writings of that nation ; especially when this Person caused also to be acknowledged the divine original of their institution, and by those who before had rejected it. Accordingly what do we perceive in these writings ?

A. Various intimations *concurring* in the person and history of Jesus, in a manner, and in a degree, in which passages taken from these books could not be made to concur in any person, except him who has been the author of great changes in the affairs and opinions of mankind. Of some of these predictions the weight depends a good deal upon the concurrence. Others possess great separate strength : one particularly. It is an

entire description, manifestly directed to one character and scene of things : it is extant in a writing declaredly prophetic ; and it applies to Christ's character, and to the circumstances of his life and death, in a way which no diversity of interpretation hath been able to confound.

Q. How is it accounted for in some measure that the advent of Christ, and its consequences, should not have been more distinctly revealed in the Jewish sacred books ?

A. By the consideration, that for the Jews to have foreseen the fall of their institution, and that it was to merge into a more perfect and comprehensive dispensation, would have too much relaxed their zeal for it, and their adherence to it ; upon which zeal and adherence the preservation of any remains, for many ages, of religious truth might in a great measure depend.

Q. Of what a revelation discloses to mankind, one only question can properly be asked : what is this ?

A. Was it important to mankind to know, or to be better assured of it.

Q. In this question, when we turn our thoughts to the great Christian doctrine of the resurrection, and of a future judgment, can any doubt be possibly entertained ?

A. No—he who gives me riches, or honors, or health, does little in comparison with just grounds for expecting a restoration to life, and a day of account and retribution : which thing Christianity hath done for millions.

Other articles of the Christian faith, although of infinite importance beside any other topic of inquiry, and worthy of their original, are only adjuncts and circumstances of this.

Q. What is observed of the morality of the religion ?

A. It is in all its parts, wise and pure ; neither adapted to vulgar prejudices, nor flattering popular notions, nor excusing established practices, but calculated truly to promote human happiness, and to produce impression and effect ; in every view of it, much more perfect than could have been expected from the natural circumstances and character of the person who delivered it ; a morality, in a word, which is, and hath been most beneficial to mankind.

Q. Upon the greatest, therefore, of all possible occasions, and for a purpose of inestimable value, it pleased the Deity to vouchsafe a miraculous attestation. Having done this for the institution, when this alone could fix its authority, or give it a beginning, to what did he commit its future progress ?

A. To the natural means of human communication, and to the influence of those causes by which human conduct and affairs are governed. The seed, being sown, was left to vegetate ; the leaven, being inserted, was left to ferment ; and both according to the laws of nature ; laws, nevertheless, disposed and controlled by that Providence which conducts the affairs of the universe, though by an influence inscrutable, and

generally undistinguishable by us. And in this, Christianity is analagous to most other provisions for happiness.

Q. Let the constant recurrence to our observation of design, and wisdom, in the works of nature, once fix upon our minds, the belief of a God, and after that all is easy: how does this appear?

A. In the counsels of a being possessed of such power and disposition, it is not improbable that there should be a future state; nor that we should be acquainted with it. A future state rectifies every thing; because, if moral agents be made, in the last event, happy or miserable, according to their conduct in the station, and under the circumstances in which they are placed, it seems not very material by the operation of what causes, or even, if you please to call it so, by what chance, or caprice, these stations are assigned, or these circumstances determined. This hypothesis, therefore, solves all that objection to the divine care and goodness, which the promiscuous distribution of good and evil is apt on so many occasions to create. This one truth changes the nature of things; gives order to confusion; makes the moral world of a piece with the natural.

Q. Nevertheless, a higher degree of assurance than any argument drawn from the light of nature, was necessary, to overcome the shock which the imagination and the senses receive from the effects and appearances of death, and the obstruction which thence arises to the expectation of a con-

tinued, or a future existence. Where will this difficulty, be found, upon reflection, to reside?

A. More in our habits of apprehension, than in the subject. Abstractedly considered, that is, without relation to the difference which habit produces in our faculties and modes of apprehension, there is nothing more in the resurrection of a dead man, than in the conception of a child; except it be this, that the one comes into this world with a system of prior consciousness about him, which the other does not; and no person will say, that he knows enough of either subject to perceive, that this circumstance makes such a difference in the two cases, that the one should be easy, and the other impossible; the one natural, the other not so.

Thought is different from motion, perception from impact: the individuality of a mind is hardly consistent with the divisibility of an extended substance; or its volition, that is, its power of originating motion, with the inertness which cleaves to every portion of matter within our observation, or our experiments. These distinctions lead us to an *immaterial* principle: at least, they so negative the mechanical properties of matter, in the constitution of a sentient and rational being, that no argument drawn from these properties, can weigh against other reasons, when the question respects the changes of which such a nature is capable, or the manner in which these changes are affected. Whatever thought be, the regular experience of *sleep* makes one thing cer-

tain, that it can be completely suspended and restored.

If any one find it too great a strain upon his thoughts, to admit the notion of a substance strictly immaterial, he can find no difficulty in allowing, that a particle as small as a particle of light, minuter than all conceivable dimensions, may as easily be the depositary and the vehicle of consciousness, as the congeries of animal substance which forms a human body, or the human brain ; that, being so, it may transfer a proper identity to whatever shall hereafter be united to it ; may be safe amidst the destruction of its integuments ; may connect the natural with the spiritual, the corruptible with the glorified body.

Q. If it be said, that the mode and means of all this is imperceptible by our senses, what may be answered ?

A. It is only what is true of the most important agencies and operations. The great powers of nature are all invisible. Gravitation, electricity, magnetism, though constantly present, and constantly exerting their influence ; though within us, near us, and about us ; overspreading the surface, or penetrating the contexture, of all bodies with which we are acquainted—depend upon substances and actions which are totally concealed from our senses. The Supreme Intelligence is so himself.

Q. But whether these, or any attempts to satisfy the imagination, bear any resemblance to the truth ; or whether the imagination, which is

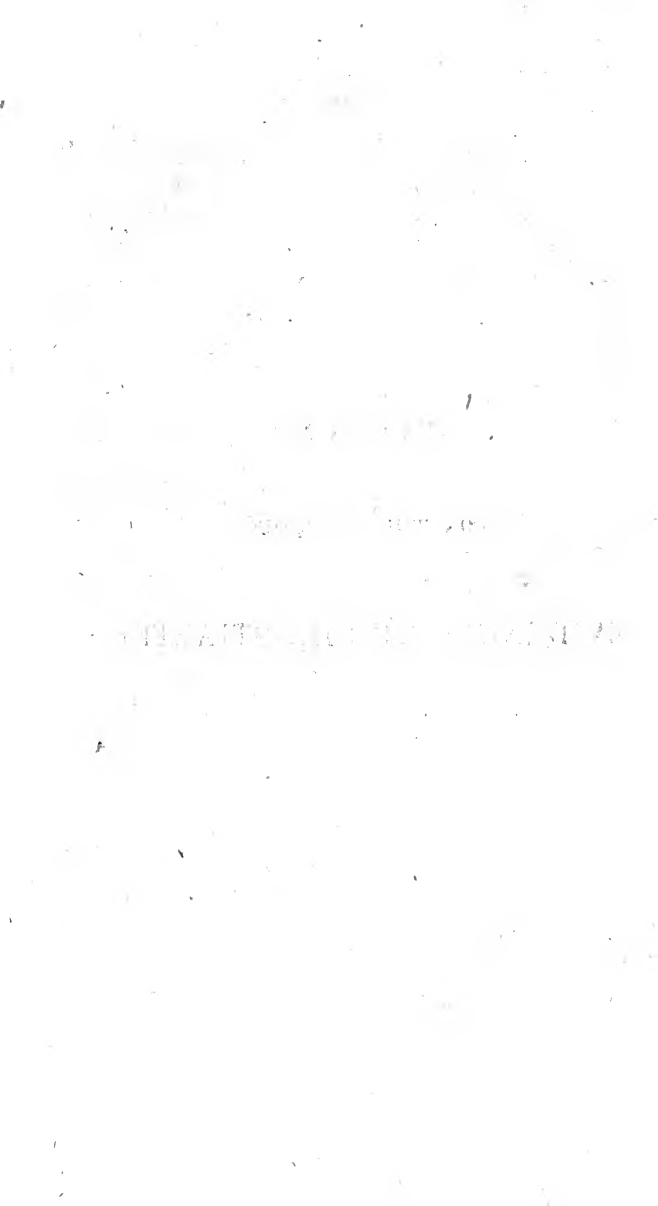
the mere slave of habit, *can* be satisfied or not; when a future state, and the revelation of it, is not only perfectly consistent with the attributes of that Being who governs the universe; when it alone removes the appearances of contrariety which attend his operations towards creatures capable of merit and demerit, of reward and punishment; when a strong body of historical evidence, confirmed by many internal tokens of truth, gives us just reason to believe that such a revelation hath actually been made, what ought to be our conduct?

A. We ought to set our minds at rest with the assurance, that in the resources of Creative Wisdom, expedients cannot be wanted to carry into effect what the Deity hath proposed; that either a new and mighty influence will descend upon the human world to resuscitate extinguished consciousness: or that, amidst the other wonderful contrivances with which the universe abounds, provision is also made, though by methods secret to us, for conducting the objects of God's moral government, through the necessary changes of their frame, to those final distinctions of happiness and misery, which he hath declared to be reserved for virtue and vice, for the use and the neglect, the right and the wrong employment, of the faculties and opportunities with which he hath been pleased severally, to intrust, and to try us.

QUESTIONS

UPON THE FOREGOING

EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.



QUESTIONS
ON
PALEY'S EVIDENCES.



Preparatory Considerations.

1. Why is it *unnecessary to prove* that mankind stood in no need of a revelation?

2. Upon what suppositions is it not *improbable* that God should make a revelation to mankind, and acquaint them with a future state?

3. In what degree is it *not improbable* that *miracles* should be wrought for that purpose?

4. In Paley's answer to the above question, in what manner, and to what extent, is his argument alleged?

5. It has been said—that it is contrary to experience that a miracle should be true, but not contrary to experience that testimony should be false. Shew the fallacy of this assertion.

6. Supposing miracles to have been wrought for the establishment of Christianity, when nothing else would have been sufficient, to what *probability* does this lead?

7. Of what *improbability* is this *probability* the exact *converse* and *measure*?

8. Shew that the *force of experience*, as an objection to miracles, is unfairly founded in the

presumption that the course of nature is either *invariable* or subject to frequent and general *variations*.

9. It has been said that in the accounts of miracles, effects are assigned without causes, or attributed to inadequate causes, or to causes of the operation of which we have no experience. What answer may be given to this ?

10. Hume states the case of miracles as *a contest of opposite improbabilities*—admitting this statement, wherein may we remark a want of argumentative justice ?

11. How has he provided an answer to every possible accumulation of historical proof ? And what is Paley's reply to this ?

12. With what short independent consideration does he reply to *Mr. Hume's Theorem* ?

PART I.

What are the two Propositions which Paley endeavours to establish in this part of his work ?

CHAP. I.

1. To support the first of these Propositions what two points must be made out ?

2. How does *the nature of the case* with regard to the present existence of Christianity, afford evidence of the activity and sufferings of the founder of Christianity and of his associates ?

3. Why is it highly probable, *from the nature of the case*, that the propagation of Christianity was attended with difficulty and danger, as addressed to the Jews ?

4. What conduct might have been expected from the Romans ?

5. Why might opposition reasonably have been expected from the heathen public ?

6. Why is it not probable that the first teachers of Christianity would find protection in the prevalent disbelief of the popular theology ?

7. How does *the nature of the case* afford a strong proof that they entered upon a *new and singular course of life*, in consequence of their new profession ?

CHAP. II.

1. Why is the testimony of Heathen writers to the transaction very valuable ?

2. What well-known quotation deserves notice in this case, and what is its date A. D. ?

3. What does this passage prove and what may be inferred from it ?

4. Give the testimonies of Suetonius and Juvenal with the inferences which may be drawn from them.

5. To what does the testimony of the younger Pliny relate, and how is his observation respecting the state of Christianity at that time confirmed ?

6. What does the testimony of Martial prove ? And to what do Epictetus and M. Aurelius ascribe the intrepidity of the Christians ?

CHAP. III.

1. Why are we to look for the internal detail of the Christian institution in our own books ?

2. What documents have we relating to the history of Jesus Christ ?

3. What are the facts which they relate, and how do these facts afford a strong inference in behalf of our proposition respecting the sufferings of the first teachers of Christianity ?

4. What are the passages in which Christ foretold the sufferings of his followers ? What are we *not* entitled and what *are* we entitled to contend from these passages ?

5. What other subjects do these books contain which tend to confirm our proposition ? and what prevents the supposition that these passages may be forgeries ?

CHAP. IV.

1. What is the account of Christianity and of the exertions of its first teachers, as stated in the SS. occasionally and dispersedly, and therefore without affording the idea of design ?

2. What was the conduct of his disciples immediately after our Saviour's departure, what conse-

quences did this conduct bring upon them, and what was their behaviour under those consequences ?

3. How were the common people engaged in a persecution of the religion, and what was the consequence of it ?

4. What important event in the history of the religion took place amidst these persecutions ?

5. When did an intermission take place in them, and what was the intermediate progress of the Christian church ?

6. By whom and in what manner was this tranquility interrupted ? How are these circumstances related by the historian ?

7. Leaving the rest of the Apostles and original associates of Christ, to what eminent teacher does the history now proceed ?

8. Give an account of his first and second expedition.

9. Give a detail of his subsequent history.

10. By what important coincidences is the historian of these facts supported ?

11. By what writings are the Apostolical Epistles, which declare the suffering state of Christianity, expressly confirmed ?

CHAP. V.

1. How does the Scripture History, though chiefly confined to one Apostle, shew *the nature of the service* with regard to the rest ?

2. How do you shew that the general reality of

the apostolic history is strongly confirmed by its only assigning adequate causes for effects really produced, and which are recorded in other writings?

3. What else do these records tend to prove with regard to the character of the first followers of Jesus?

4. Where is this new character perpetually referred to, what profane author adds his testimony to the same, and what does that testimony tend to prove?

CHAP. VI.

1. What are the eight considerations, briefly stated, as considered in the preceding chapters, and which prove the *first point*, viz. that the early teachers of Christianity voluntarily exposed themselves to labours and sufferings in attestation of the extraordinary story which they propagated, and entered into a new course of life in consequence thereof.

2. Shew that the story for which they so exposed themselves must have been *miraculous*, or that they made pretensions to miraculous evidence of some kind or other.

3. How may we infer, that the original story was *miraculous*, from the miraculous powers claimed by Christians in succeeding ages?

CHAP. VII.

1. In considering the question, whether the account which our SS. contain be the same story for which the first propagators of Christianity acted and suffered, state what testimony the brief incidental notices of it in heathen writers offer.

2. In what relation to the religion did the authors of these notices stand?

3. What may be observed of the few Jewish writers of that period, and particularly of the *testimony* or *designed silence* of Josephus?

4. What may be observed of the whole series of Christian writers? and what gives the arguments drawn from their works a peculiar force?

5. Why is it unnecessary to carry citations from these writers to a lower age than that of Justin Martyr?

6. How do the peculiar rites and usages of Christianity bear upon the argument?

7. What may be opposed to the insinuation, that the accounts in our books were framed from these rites and usages already established?

8. What internal evidence is there in the Gospels that their accounts are in the main those which the apostles and first teachers delivered?

CHAP. VIII.

1. What were the peculiar circumstances and situation of the authors to whom the 4 Gospels are ascribed ?
2. How is your estimation of their narratives affected thereby ?
3. Confining ourselves at present to the assertion, that the facts recorded in the Gospels are the same as what the apostles preached, what is the proof of this ?
4. How may we perceive the peculiar force and value of Scriptural information ?
5. If *any one* of the 4 Gospels be genuine, what do we gain ?
6. If we must be considered as encountering the risk of error in determining the authors of our Books, to what advantage are we entitled ?
7. Supposing that some of the Evangelists had seen and used each other's works, how is their separate authority or mutual confirmation but little diminished thereby ?
8. What may be supposed from the parallelisms between St. Matthew and St. Luke ?
9. What is the Gospel of St. John allowed on all hands to be ?
10. How is the aggregate authority of the SS. to be considered, and why are we apt to overlook this authority ?
11. In the composition of our Scripture documents, what seems to be the natural progress ?

12. With this progress how do the records in our possession correspond?

13. How is it that the genuineness of these records, though a point of importance, is not essential to our argument?

CHAP. IX.

1. What proves that the SS. were not of modern contrivance, and that they were more generally sought after than any other books?

2. What argument arises from the style and language of the N. T.?

3. Why are the accounts of supernatural events which its books contain, no reason for questioning their genuineness?

4. If it had been easy to have forged Christian writings in the early ages what might have been expected?

5. What attempt of this kind was made, and with what success?

6. What may be advanced against the opinion of an arbitrary or conjectural ascription of the Gospels to supposed authors?

7. What may be inferred from the early agreement of Christian writers and Churches upon the genuineness of the SS.

8. What was the first interference of authority in the question, and what was probably the nature of it?

9. Ancient testimony being the principal strength of an argument concerning the genuine-

ness of ancient writings why is it necessary to exhibit this testimony in detail?

10. What are the allegations upon the subject which are capable of being established by proof?

SECTION I.

1. It being observed that the Historical Books of the N. T. are quoted or alluded to by a series of Christian writings in a close and regular succession from the time of the Apostles, what may be said regarding the medium of proof stated in this proposition?

2. By what instances from profane history are its nature and value illustrated by Paley?

3. What testimonies of a similar kind can be produced from an epistle ascribed to Barnabas the companion of St. Paul?

4. What from an epistle written by Clement Bishop of Rome?

5. What objection may be raised against this testimony of Clement, and how answered?

6. What testimony can be produced from Her-
mas, Ignatius, Polycarp, Papias, Justin Martyr,
and Hegesippus? From an epistle written by
the Churches of Lyons and Vienne, and from
Irenæus?

7. What circumstance very much strengthens
the testimony of the above-mentioned writers?

8. After mentioning the authorities to which
Paley alludes, between Irenæus and Clement of

Alexandria, state the peculiar testimony of this latter.

9. State that of Tertullian, Hippolytus, Origen, of his scholars Gregory of Neocæsaria, and Dionysius of Alexandria, of Cyprian, of Victorin, of Arnobius and Lactantius, and of Eusebius.

10. Why does Paley close this branch of evidence with Eusebius?

SECTION II.

When the SS. are quoted or alluded to, it is with peculiar respect as to Books *sui generis*, possessing peculiar authority, and conclusive in all questions among Christians: state what may be regarded as specific testimonies of this from the writings of Theophilus Bishop of Antioch, from a passage in a writer against Artemon, from a piece ascribed to Hippolytus, from Origen, Cyprian, Novatus, Anatolius, from the expressed opinion of the Arians and their antagonist Athanasius, from Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem, Epiphanius, Pœbadius, Basil of Cæsarea, Ephraim the Syrian, and Jerome.

SECTION III.

1. The SS. were in very early times collected into a distinct volume. What proof of this may be adduced from Ignatius, Clement of Alexandria, Polycarp, Eusebius, Irenæus, Melito, Tertullian, and Cyprian?

2. What circumstances during the persecution of Dioclesian, and after the conversion of Constantine, prove the peculiar estimation in which the SS. were held.

SECTION IV.

1. Our SS. were soon distinguished by appropriate titles of respect. How is this proposition proved from Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Dionysius Bishop of Corinth, Irenæus, Theophilus, Tertullian, Origen, and Cyprian.

2. What do their expressions indicate, and within what time after the publication of the Books do they occur?

SECTION V.

1. Our SS. were publicly read and expounded by the early Christians. Prove this from Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Eusebius, Origen, Cyprian, and Augustine.

2. What two other books besides our SS. were thus read? And why does this circumstance subtract very little from our argument?

SECTION VI.

1. What inference may be drawn from the great industry displayed about the holy SS. in respect to commentaries, harmonies, and versions?

2. Give an account of the writers of Scriptural

commentaries, harmonies, &c. to the time of Chrysostom at the end of the 4th century.

3. What is the single exception to these authors, who confined themselves entirely to commenting upon the Books found in the N. T.?

4. Of all the ancient versions of the N. T. which is the most valuable, and why?

SECTION VII.

1. What were the three most ancient topics of controversy among Christians?

2. Amidst the disputes which arose from these subjects it is a great satisfaction that all sects, &c. appealed to our Scriptures: adduce instances to prove this from the age of Basilides, A. D. 120, to that of Chrysostom about 400.

3. Of all ancient heretics who was the most extraordinary? what were his opinions, and how did he treat the Books of the N. T.?

4. How does Lardner sum up this head of evidence in his general Review?

SECTION VIII.

1. The 4 Gospels, the Acts, the 13 epistles of St. Paul, the first of St. John, and the first of St. Peter were received without doubt by those who doubted concerning the other canonical books. Why does Paley state this Proposition?

2. What testimonies does he bring forward in support of it?

SECTION IX.

1. What testimonies are produced by Paley to shew that our Historical SS. were attacked by their early adversaries, as containing the authentic accounts of the Religion ?

2. What principal argument do you draw in favour of the Books of the N. T. from the notice taken of them by their adversaries ?

SECTION X.

1. Why does the evidence drawn from the Catalogues of Scripture come later than the rest ? And why is it very satisfactory when it does come ?

2. What authorities are enumerated by Paley on this head ?

SECTION XI.

1. The foregoing propositions cannot be asserted of what are called the Apocryphal Books of the N. T. On account of what opinions does Paley think it advantageous to prove this ?

2. What observations does he address to the persons who hold such opinions ?

3. In what centuries did Apocryphal writings exist in any considerable number ? what is the most probable account of their origin ? and what may be said of their notoriety ?

CHAP. X.

1. Recapitulate the arguments which prove that the Founder of Christianity, his associates, and immediate followers, passed their lives in labours and sufferings, and also submitted to new rules of conduct.

2. Shew, in a similar recapitulation, that they acted thus solely in consequence of their belief in the miraculous history recorded in our SS.

3. Why is the proof of the strict genuineness of the Books of the N. T. more perhaps than is necessary to the support of the argument?

 PART. I.

PROPOSITION II.—CHAP. I.

1. To what extent does Paley profess his belief in miraculous accounts? And by what does he declare that his belief in any such account would be greatly strengthened?

2. In comparing our evidence for miracles with that of our adversaries Paley divides his distinctions into two classes, those which relate to the *proof* and those which relate to the *miracles*. Of the first sort how many are proposed, and what accounts of supernatural occurrences do they remove out of the case?

3. How many distinctions does he propose relating to the miracles themselves? And what cases of miraculous events do these remove?

4. What observations may be applied to those miracles of the N. T. which seem to fall within any of the distinctions proposed?

CHAP. II.

1. What are the examples of miraculous events with which Hume confronts those of Scripture? Why does Paley consider them as particularly entitled to his notice? And what are his observations regarding their probable solution?

2. What ultimate observations upon these examples present themselves?

PART II.

CHAP. I.

1. In treating upon the subject of Prophecy what example does Paley adduce from the Old Testament? What are his comments upon its nature and application to Christianity? And how does he repute the interpretation given to it by the Jews? What reasons does he give for selecting this prophecy in particular?

2. What example of prophecy does he select from the N. T.? and what are his remarks upon it?

3. How is the general agreement of this prophecy with the event made evident? And what in Paley's opinion is the only doubt that can be raised upon the subject?

4. What are the observations which he brings to bear on this point?

CHAP. II.

1. In stating the morality of the Gospel what two points may be conceded?

2. How do you briefly describe the scope of Christianity as a *revelation*, and what is the direct object of the design?

3. Why cannot morality be properly a subject of discovery?

4. What kind of morality however is that of the Gospel?

5. What is peculiar to the morality of the Gospel regarding *the things taught*?

6. What is peculiar to it regarding the *manner* of our Saviour's teaching?

7. What is worthy of observation in the *parables* of the N. T? And in the *Lord's Prayer*?

8. Our Lord's discourses may be also viewed in their *negative* character; i. e. not in what they did but in what they did *not* contain. Under this head what are the reflections which Paley makes?

9. When we consider the moral teaching of Christ, and the innate excellence of Christianity what must the most reluctant understanding be induced to acknowledge?

10. What more may the qualities observable in the religion be thought to prove ?

11. In what way may the *character of Christ* be considered as part of the morality of the Gospels ?

CHAP. III.

1. In what does the candour of the writers of the N. T. consist ?

2. Cite a very peculiar example of this ?

3. Mention some instances from St. Mathew and the Acts in which the Evangelists honestly relate what they must have known would make against them.

4. Quote some other passages very unlike the production of artifice or forgery, and give the remarks of Paley upon them.

5. Give instances of the *naturalness* of some things related in the N. T.

6. What do you understand by *properties* observable in the Gospels ?

CHAP. IV.

1. To what is the argument expressed by the *identity* of Christ's Character chiefly applied ?

2. The passages of Christ's history in St. John, are, except his passion and resurrection, for the most part different from those in the other Gospels, what is the ancient and probably true account of this difference ?

3. In what article does Paley find the argument from this identity most strong?

4. What passages does he compare together on this point and what are his observations on the comparison?

5. What are the other six points in which this identity of character is discerned?

6. How is it apparent in the narrative of his sufferings and in the number of his apostles?

CHAP. V.

1. How do you establish the *originality* of our Saviour's character, and how do you answer the only objection which can be urged against it?

CHAP. VI.

1. What are the advantages of proving the conformity of facts occasionally mentioned in the S.S. with the state of things in those times as represented by independent accounts? And why is this particularly strong as applied to the N. T.?

2. Give some examples of this conformity as quoted by Paley, and mention the three considerations which greatly strengthen the argument.

3. Amidst so many conformities some difficulties must be expected: state that respecting the *taxing* under Cyrenius, with its solution.

4. State that relating to the age of Jesus in the reign of Tiberius, with its solution.

5. What objections arise from the name of

Theudas being introduced into the Acts and that of Zacharias son of Barachias into St. Matthew's Gospel? and how may they be removed.

CHAP. VII.

1. What argument is derived from the *notes of correspondency* observable in the Epistles of St. Paul and his History in the Acts?

2. How does this argument bear upon the general question of the Christian History?

3. How may this argument be pursued in the writings ascribed to St. John?

CHAP. VII.

1. For what reason does more weight belong to the resurrection, than to any other miracles, as an evidence for Christianity?

2. What are the only doubts that can be thrown upon the Apostles' testimony to the resurrection, and what answer may be given to these?

CHAP. IX.

SECTION I.

1. Paley divides his account of the Propagation of Christianity into 3 periods. Shew the degree and extent of it in each of these?

2. What are the 4 observations which it appears material to make upon this account?

3. What are the Scriptural *parallel testimonies* with this account?

4. By what foreign evidence is it confirmed?

5. Give a catalogue of Christian writers who flourished in the early ages, and the reason why they are alluded to by Paley.

SECTION II.

1. What are the four successive stages to which Paley directs our attention in viewing the progress of Christianity?

2. Why is the history in all these several stages without a parallel?

3. What comparison does Paley make between the early propagation of Christianity and the success of Christian missions in modern times? And what conclusion does he draw from thence?

SECTION III.

1. What are the points of resemblance between Mahometanism and Christianity?

2. What are the great points of difference which separate the two cases?

3. What four causes co-operated with and assisted Mahomet in the early propagation of his religion?

4. What are the six points which indicate the design of Mahomet to make converts and to make those converts soldiers?

5. With all its external advantages, what progress did his religion make at Mecca? When did he change the scene of action? To what city

did he remove, and from what cause? How did he then change his language and conduct, and from that time what was the success of Mahometanism?

6. Shew that from this success compared with the early propagation of Christianity no inference can be justly drawn prejudicial to the latter.

PART III.

CHAP. I.

1. Why is it rash and unphilosophical to reject the substance of a story on account of some diversity in the circumstances in which it is related?

2. With what instances does Paley confirm this opinion?

3. From what does much of the discrepancy in the Gospels arise? and why is it a very uncertain ground of objection?

CHAP. II.

1. State and explain that species of candour, which is shown to every other book, but is sometimes refused to the SS.?

2. What objection to the N. T. has been raised concerning the quotations of the O. T. found in it? What remarks does Paley make upon them, and upon the objection?

3. How does he weaken the force of an objection founded upon an error imputed to the first

Christians, viz. the expected approach of the day of judgment?

4. In what lies the difficulty attending the subject of erroneous opinions imputed to the Apostles? And how may it be met?

5. What two cautions does Paley recommend in reading the Apostolic writings?

CHAP. III.

1. What does our Saviour undoubtedly recognize in the Mosaic institution?

2. How far are we bound as Christians to go?

3. But in what case do we bring unnecessary difficulties into the whole system? And how?

4. Illustrate this by example?

5. Paley observes, that a reference in the N T. to a passage in the old, does not exclude all inquiry into its credibility &c. Why does he think it necessary to state this explicitly?

CHAP. IV.

1. It is acknowledged that Christianity did not produce universal or even general conviction: this has been called by some, a *rejection* of its history and miracles; and the objection divides itself into two parts (1) as it regards the Jews, (2) as it relates to the Heathens. How does Paley treat the first Part of this objection, in accounting for the rejection of Christianity by the Jews?

3. How does he account for the *silence* of the

great and learned heathens concerning Christianity? Give his remarks upon the letter of Pliny, as affording an example of that silence and disdain with which they viewed its doctrines, evidences, and books.

4. Quote the observations of Paley upon the words of Tacitus who called Christianity a *pernicious superstition*.

CHAP. V.

1. Shew that the *infrequency* of appeal to the Christian miracles in the Apostolic Epistles is no valid objection to the religion?

2. How may we account for the Christian Fathers and Apologists referring to the same miracles less frequently than we might have expected?

CHAP. VI.

1. How do you answer the objection, that if a *revelation* really came from God, the proof of it would be so public and manifest, that no human being would remain ignorant of or unconvinced by it?

2. What would be the probable effect of that overpowering Evidence which our Adversaries require in a revelation?

CHAP. VII.

1. What objection has been raised, or rather what paradox has been supported, against the supposed effects of Christianity?

2. What two sources of mistake however may be perceived in the conclusions which the objectors draw from what they call experience?

3. In answer to the first of these, shew where the influence of Christianity *is* to be sought for and where *not*: shew how it operates upon public usages and institutions, as well as upon the public judgment of morals: also how the value of Christianity is to be finally appreciated.

4. In answer to the second, shew that Christianity is charged with many consequences for which it is not responsible: that it is not chargeable with every mischief of which it has been the *occasion*, not the *motive*.

5. What effect has Christianity had in the conduct of war?

6. What does Paley observe concerning the differences of opinion which have always prevailed among Christians?

CHAP. VIII.

1. How do you shew that much depends in religion upon the order in which we dispose our inquiries?

2. What does Paley profess has been his own great care in this work? What afforded him peculiar satisfaction in it? Upon what does he assert the truth of Christianity to depend? And how does this appear?

3. What does Paley remark upon the Inspiration of the SS. as affecting their evidence?

4. Shew that in viewing the detail of Christian

miracles we find every supposition negatived by which they can be resolved into fraud or delusion.

5. Point out some of the prophetic intimations of the advent, person, and character of our Saviour, and shew why the advent of Jesus and its consequences were not more distinctly revealed in the Jewish SS.

6. What is the only question which can properly be asked concerning what a revelation discloses to mankind? And what answer does Christianity afford to this?

7. Concerning other articles of the Christian faith what does Paley remark?

8. What observations does he make concerning the manner in which the Christian religion originated and was subsequently conducted?

9. Why is it probable that we should be made acquainted with a future state, and why is a higher degree of assurance necessary on this point than any argument, drawn from the light of nature, can give?

10. What are the distinctions which lead us to the idea of an immaterial principle? How does Paley endeavour to assist the imagination of him who finds it too great a strain upon his thoughts to admit the notion of a substance strictly immaterial? By what analogies does he defend his argument?

11. What are his concluding remarks upon the probability of a resurrection and a future state, independent of the foregoing, or any other endeavours to satisfy the imagination?



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